

Avoiding common cleaning injuries

Cleaning injuries in the manufacturing industry aren't just injuries that occur during the actual cleaning process. They also include hazards that occur after cleaning as a result of a poor process, as explained by Murray McDonald.

Industrial cleaning is a process that is necessary and occurs on a daily basis and therefore leaves room for regular cleaning errors that can lead to sometimes serious injury. The following elements are three key hazards common to the manufacturing industry and how they can be avoided.

Slips and falls

Today, many safety conscious facilities understand the serious injury that slips and falls can cause to workers. Non-slip floor surfaces are one of the ways some facilities can minimise the risk of this hazard, however, the use of cutting fluids and oils, and loose wood or metal shavings, is a key part of working in the manufacturing industry and no matter what floor surface you have, these spills and shavings will be daily occurrences. There are various OH&S issues that workers and facility managers and owners should be aware of, but slips and falls are some of the most dangerous hazards. More often than not, these dangers are not as obvious as other safety concerns, such as someone incorrectly using an angle grinder or unloading a vehicle in a strenuous manner. It is common to see a slip hazard attended to only after the fall has occurred. Today's modern machines can wash, scrub, sweep and vacuum. Traditional methods include using rags, harsh scrubbing, water hoses and mops and buckets. Using traditional methods provide a wipe down of a surface, rather than a deep clean and dry. Drying, as well as the cleaning, is essential to the manufacturing cleaning process and preventing slips and falls.

Manual handling of cleaning tools

Manual scrubbing and mopping in industrial cleaning are two of the main cleaning concerns that lead to injuries, RSI and disability due to their repetitive and strenuous actions. Manufacturing facilities and workshops are commonly large spaces, and this type of repetitive bending and twisting over large areas does not adhere to Australian workplace safety standards. Most industrial cleaning machines are specifically designed to be robust and sturdy, and although heavy duty, they are still compact, transportable and easy to use as most commercial cleaning equipment. If your facility doesn't have the suitable cleaning equipment, it's important to ensure that risks are minimised by reducing the physical cleaning time per person, providing mechanical hoists or trolleys for equipment where appropriate and ensuring the space that needs to be cleaned allows for enough room to manoeuvre safely and comfortably.

Hazardous substances

Manufacturing facilities are regularly exposed to potentially hazardous substances, such as fibreglass and spray paints. Safety precautions such as wearing the correct PPE help to minimise any potentially harmful side effects to workers. However, eliminating rather than

prevention is one of the best safety practices to implement if possible to do so. Solvents used in cleaning agents that workers can breathe in, or enter the body through skin contact or through the mouth i.e. cigarettes or eating, are known to cause memory loss, headaches, tiredness and nausea. According to Victoria's WorkSafe Manufacturing Module, "exposure to high levels of some solvents can cause liver damage, unconsciousness, dizziness and even death". Industrial cleaning equipment, as with cleaning equipment for some of the most infection control conscious industries, such as health care, implement cleaning procedures that require no chemicals.

Dry steam, when heated to 180 degree Celsius, kills all bacteria and instantly breaks down all manufacturing grime, such as grease and oils. Due to steam being a dry vapour, it can get it all hard to reach areas that common cleaning tools and equipment can't and dries surfaces in minutes. Enough dry steam to be clean a large warehouse space can be created with several litres of water. Normally steam machines come with attachments and tools to meet specific manufacturing cleaning applications i.e. floors, tools, vehicles and other machinery.

Murray McDonald has over 20 years experience in the distribution of industrial and commercial cleaning equipment and is Director of Duplex Cleaning Machines. Duplex is an expert in the distribution of cleaning machine products in Australia and New Zealand and has solved cleaning issues and improved cleaning standards in thousands of industrial and commercial facilities.

www.duplexcleaning.com.au

New chair for Safe Work Australia

Ann Sherry AO has been appointed as the new Chair of Safe Work Australia by the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations Bill Shorten.

Sherry has been appointed to this part-time position for three years. She replaces outgoing Safe Work Australia Chair, Tom Phillips AM, who oversaw the establishment of Safe Work Australia. Sherry is the Chief Executive Officer of Carnival Australia, the largest cruise ship operator in Australasia. In addition, she holds a number of non-executive roles. She is a Fellow of the Institute of Public Administration and a Member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors. In 2004 Sherry was awarded an Order of Australia for her contribution to the Australian community through corporate management policies and practices that embrace gender equity, social justice and work and family practices. In 2013, she was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters by Macquarie University in recognition of her contribution to Australian business and civic life.

"Ann brings a wealth of experience to the work health and safety and worker's compensation table through many years as a leader in Australian business," Minister Shorten said.

www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au

