

COVID-19 Sanitation and Chemical Exposure Safety

It is important to remember that while cleaning and disinfecting surfaces to prevent the spread of COVID-19, employees should also be protecting themselves and others from exposure to the chemicals they are using. Chemical exposure can result in irritation to the skin, eyes, nose, throat and respiratory system – especially if the exposure is prolonged or frequent. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) suggest the following safety tips for preventing chemical exposure while cleaning:

- Maintain a current safety data sheet (SDS) for each cleaning chemical used on site. All employees should be familiar with SDSs of products they are using which detail personal protective equipment (PPE) requirements and first aid measures for exposure.
- Employ the use of PPE to at least the level required by the SDS or more protection if required by your supervisor.
- Ensure areas being cleaned are well ventilated with a fan or open window, if possible.
- Keep cleaning products in their original, labeled containers. If transferring to a secondary container, the new container must be labeled with the common name of the chemical and appropriate hazard warnings.
- Do not mix cleaning products or any other chemicals unless specifically directed to by a supervisor.
- Only use cleaning products as directed.
- Avoid contacting your skin with cleaning chemicals.
- Dispose of gloves and wash hands thoroughly with soap and water when cleaning is complete and gloves have been removed.
- Do not spray cleaning chemicals on or near others while cleaning.
- Be mindful when cleaning of others in the area, who may be sensitive to aspects of certain cleaning products, including smells.
- If a large area needs to be cleaned or harsh chemicals used, discuss cleaning options with your supervisor to determine best times to complete these tasks and whether other employees can be present.
- If an exposure occurs, contact your supervisor and call 911 for emergencies. If possible, get the SDS for the chemical that was being used at the time for transport to the emergency room or doctor to assist medical personnel with treatment options.