



Work-related Injuries Among Janitors

Work-related injuries among commercial janitors in Washington State, comparisons by gender

Journal of Safety Research, 2017

Caroline K. Smith, MPH, Naomi J. Anderson, MPH

Overview

Janitors are a large sector of employment in the United States and are considered high risk, low-wage workers.

This study describes the types of injuries, cost, and lost work time of janitors who filed a workers' compensation claim in Washington State for an injury that occurred during the years 2003 through 2013. Claims were included in the analysis if they were covered by the State Fund (SF), coded as compensable (required payment for more than just medical bills), and were identified through the Washington State Risk Classification system as working in janitorial services. In addition, we limited the study group to those in the National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) Services Industry Sector.

Previous research has identified janitors as working in high hazard, low pay, and low status occupations. This is the first study to examine not only injuries, but also to compare injuries by gender and compare direct workers' compensation costs for janitorial service workers.

Contact the SHARP author:
Caroline.Smith@Lni.wa.gov

Research for Safe Work

The SHARP Program at the Washington State Department of Labor & Industries partners with business and labor to develop sensible, effective solutions to identify and eliminate industry-wide hazards. Learn more at www.lni.wa.gov/Safety/Research/

Key Findings

- Women make up approximately one-third of the employed population of janitorial service workers, but they suffer twice the rate of time-loss injuries
 - Compared to men, women:
 - Were younger at time of injury
 - Had lower incomes
 - Had a significantly different distribution of injury types
- Factors associated with higher time-loss days included:
 - Age
 - Being married (men)
 - Injury type (for both genders)
- Factors associated with higher medical costs included:
 - Spanish language preference for communication (women)
 - Specific injury types
 - Number of days from injury to first time-loss payment
 - Whether or not the injured worker had a prior workers' compensation claim

Impact

Understanding differences in how safety information and training are provided to men, women, English speakers and non-English speakers is critical to understanding how we can reduce injuries among janitorial service workers. Improving the workers' compensation claim experience for non-English speaking workers should be a high priority. Providing linguistically and culturally appropriate training may go a long way towards reducing the burden of injuries among janitorial service workers.

Find the article here:

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsr.2017.06.016>

Funding for this project was provided in part by a grant from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH)