

# Cleaners' Safety Newsletter



Project Updates:

Summer 2024

- We are happy to announce that we have a working draft of our Calculator User Guide – a step-by-step guide for using and understanding the Janitors Workload Calculator. This document contains details and definitions for every variable included in the calculator, information on which tool and task combinations exist, guidance for every user profile tab, examples, and limited guidance on how to interpret results. Please email us at: [CleanerStudy@Lni.wa.gov](mailto:CleanerStudy@Lni.wa.gov) and we would be happy to send you a copy.
  - This is a draft document only and has not been finalized or officially published – we expect to release a final version later this year. If you have feedback on the calculator or user guide, please send that to us as well.
- Please join us in welcoming our new ergonomist – Christina Garbuz. Christina will be working with the CORE ergonomics and workload assessment team to help us evaluate the workload calculator, conduct lab & field studies, and develop new education and outreach materials to keep WA janitors and cleaners safe on the job. Christina grew up in Spokane, WA, speaks Ukrainian and Russian, and recently graduated from Gonzaga University with a B.S. in Human Physiology and a minor in Psychology.
- Please note: while we have updated our materials and contact information to reflect our new name - our existing phone number, [website](#), and email ([JanitorStudy@Lni.wa.gov](mailto:JanitorStudy@Lni.wa.gov)) all still work.

## Hazard Spotlight: Chemical Exposures

In this issue of the newsletter, we are continuing to focus on the hazardous chemical exposures that cleaners face at work. Our statewide survey of janitors (2019-2020) included questions on a variety of work topics, including whether or not janitors experienced any irritation due to chemical exposures. There were 620 complete responses to the survey. Of these, 218 janitors (35%) reported experiencing irritation due to chemical exposures.

We asked janitors they ever experienced irritation to their eyes, skin, or breathing (respiratory system) from chemicals they used at work. If they said yes, they experienced irritation from chemicals at work - they could then list up to 10 specific types of chemicals that caused the irritation and describe how often they used these products.

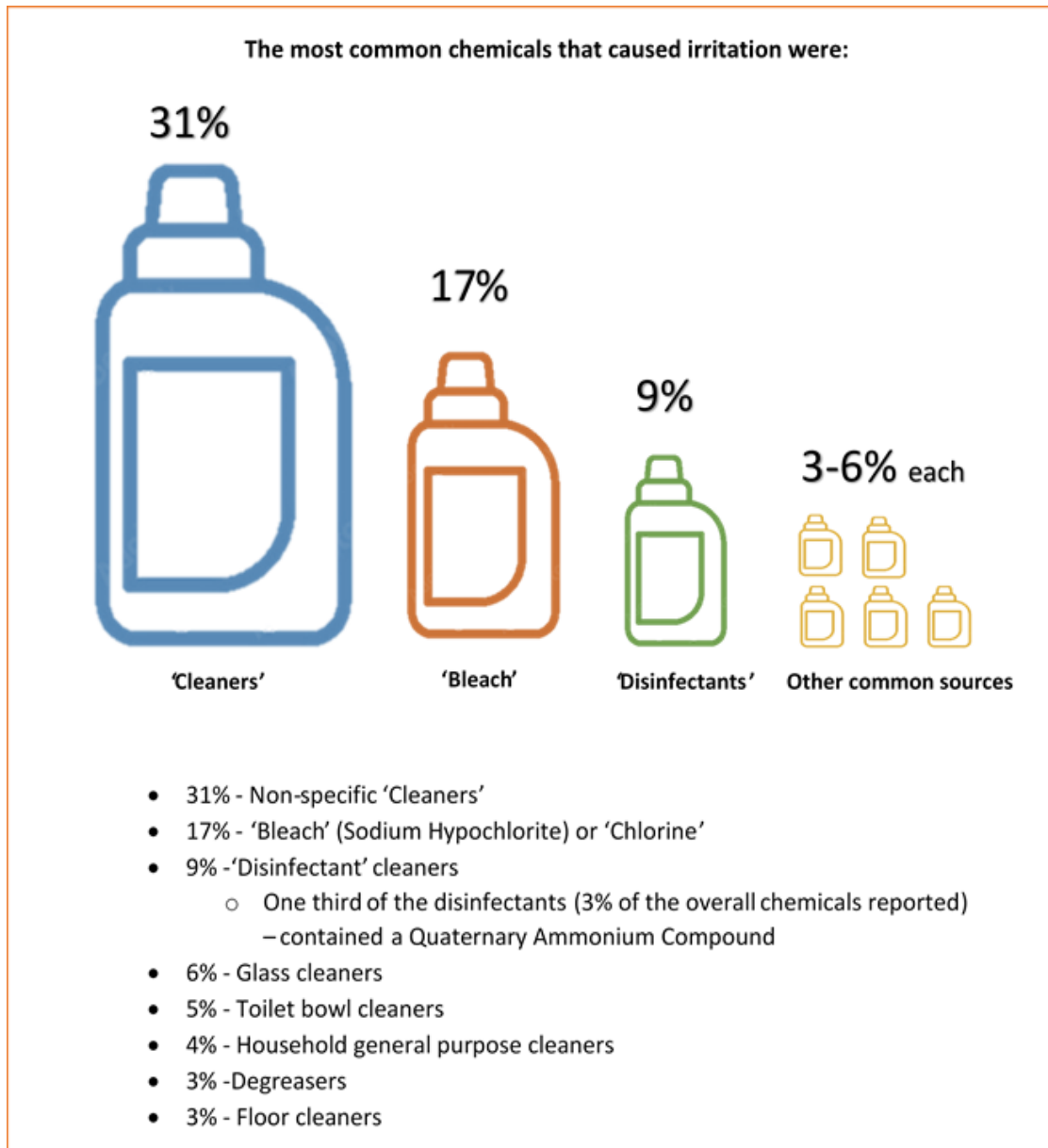


To learn more about the study, call/text/email SHARP  
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What we know about the most common chemicals that caused irritation for the WA janitors who took our survey:



- **Bleach** and **Disinfectants** were the most common sources of irritation identified.
- Many disinfectants contain what are called [quaternary ammonium compounds](#), and these can be very toxic to breathe or swallow.
  - If you have Quaternary Ammonium Compounds at your job:
    - All staff should be trained on how to safely use and dispose of them.

- The right personal protective equipment (PPE) should be available to protect eyes, lungs, and skin – and cleaners should have training on how to use the PPE to help protect themselves. This might include well-fitting masks, gloves, and/or eye protection. Replace these items if they tear or break. Read the product label to know what you need.
- If possible, use disinfectants in well-ventilated areas.
- Reduce exposure to these chemicals and/or discuss safer alternatives.
  - For example, [products that have earned the Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)'s Design for the Environment \(DfE\) Certification](#) have been evaluated for their effects on human health.