

Cleaners' Safety Newsletter



Spring 2025

Announcements: Looking for Mop Study Participants!

We are looking for experienced cleaners that are willing to come to the SHARP research lab in Tumwater, WA and test three different kinds of mop handles. The study will take approximately 4 hours. Participants will receive a \$100 gift card. To join the study or for more information, please contact: Christina.Garbuz@Lni.wa.gov

Understanding Work Stress for Janitors

Janitors are essential to keeping our communities clean and safe. However, their job can be dangerous. Janitors may work with strong chemicals, get hurt, or feel scared or stressed. Most janitors work alone, combined with the dangers of the job, can make them feel sad or worried, hurting their overall health and well-being. It is important to understand how work stress affects janitor's mental health and how to help them feel safe at work.

According to the American Psychological Association, work stress happens when a job makes someone feels constantly worried, tired or upset. Factors that influence work stress *include too much work, not feeling safe, not being able to make choices, or not getting along with others at work*. Studies show that when people feel chronically stressed and do not get help to manage stress, they can get physically and emotionally sick. This may include feeling very tired most of the time (fatigue), feeling very sad or depressed, feeling nervous or anxious, and suffering physical problems including higher blood pressure, chronic sore muscles or hurting joints, and getting more easily injured at work.

Hazard Spotlight: Work Stress

From our work with janitors in WA, we know that many janitors report health issues that may be linked to stress. For example, [in our 2019-2020 statewide survey of janitors](#), many janitors reported their **health as fair or poor** (19.4%), 43.5% reported **poor sleep**, and 19.1% scored **high in depressive symptoms**. Additionally, [in focus groups conducted in 2019](#), we asked janitors about their wellness and workplace stressors. Among the most common sources of stress, janitors reported the following:

- Feeling very tired all the time
- Too much work to do
- Having to work too fast and feeling a lot of pressure



- Being treated unfairly or unkindly by supervisors
- Not being taught how to stay safe
- Not having the right tools or safety gear

Note: Read our Spring Tip Sheet for strategies and resources to manage work stress.

Spotting the Signs of Work Stress

Identifying work stress early can help prevent more severe health problems later. If you often feel some of the things below, it might mean your job is making you too stressed.

Emotional

- Irritability or mood swings
- Loss of motivation, commitment, and confidence
- Feelings of hopelessness
- Increase in emotional reactions (e.g. being more tearful, sensitive, or aggressive)

Physical

- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Stomach and digestion issues
- Muscle pain
- Increased blood pressure
- Weakened immune system (e.g. getting sick often)

Behavioral

- Increased absences from work
- Difficulty concentrating
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Smoking cigarettes
- Abusing drugs and alcohol
- Having trouble doing your work



Feeling Stress at Work?

If your job feels like too much right now, you are not alone and there are ways to feel better. Check [out our latest Tip Sheet: Work Stress](#) with practical ideas to manage stress at work.

In the Tip Sheet you, you will find:

- Ways to take care of your mental well-being at work and beyond
- Links to helpful resources and support

We want to hear from you! Soon, there will be opportunities to join conversations where you can share your experiences and ideas. Stay tuned, your voice matters!