The Preventing harm to Cleaning Workers Report

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The Cleaning Sector - Facts

- Cleaning is carried out in every workplace.
- The cleaning industry is a growing sector.
- It is increasingly being put out to tender.
- The sector is dominated by small businesses, many of which employ fewer than 10 workers.
- Cleaning is an essential task, and when done well can reduce both risks to workers’ safety and health and costs to the business.
Three big challenges to safe and healthy cleaning

1. Contracting out ->
   - strong cost-cutting pressures on cleaning companies
   - inadequate investment in training and other management activities essential for worker protection.

2. As labour costs tend to make up the largest part of the costs of a cleaning company, there is a risk that unscrupulous employers will seek to gain an unfair advantage in tendering processes by illegal employment practices
   - Eg. not paying full social insurance costs or employing illegal labour.

3. A poor perception of cleaning and cleaning workers can discourage the effective occupational safety and health management of cleaning services.
   - Eg. failing to provide appropriate equipment and training because the employer does not view the task as important.
Common hazards, risks and health outcomes

- Risk of slips, trips, and falls, particularly during ‘wet work’
- Risk of musculoskeletal disorders, for example from carrying loads or doing repetitive work
- Exposure to dangerous substances contained in cleaning agents
- Exposure to hazardous substances being cleaned, which can include biological hazards such as moulds or human biological wastes
- Psychosocial issues including work-related stress, violence, and bullying
- Risks, such as electric shock, from work equipment
Common work-related health disorders recognised in cleaners include:

- Injuries from slips, trips and falls
- Musculoskeletal disorders
- Work-related stress, anxiety and sleeping disorders
- Skin diseases such as contact dermatitis and eczema
- Respiratory disorders including asthma, and
- Cardiovascular diseases
Thank you for your attention!

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