Healthy working conditions for cleaning personnel

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European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

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Introduction

• EU health and safety authorities classify the cleaning sector as particularly vulnerable to certain work-related risk.
  press: 5.11.2009
• Preventing harm to cleaning workers is absolutely necessary.
• The following lecture shows a wide range of possibilities to improve the welfare of cleaners.
• The range is recommended by Ilmarinen, as you will see next.
Handlings acts to promote Work Abilility

1. Technique work equipment/A Agents
2. Work organization and leadership
3. Individual physical and mental fitness
4. Qualification/individual resources

Worker*. Physical activity, healthy und invigorating life-style

J. Ilmarinen, FIOH
Structure

1. Experience regarding technique/agents
2. Organizational measures “Job enrichment”
3. Physical fitness: Occupation specific early rehab. intervention
4. Improving the individual resources: Learning by doing
5. Healthy and efficient working conditions, cleaning in Lemgo
6. Summary
1.1 Ergonomic Development

Cleaning personnel complains about the equipment for wet floor-cleaning, for example:

- Too heavy
- Not adjustable
- Handle not adapted to hands
- Material feels cold
- Mop absorbs a lot of water – very heavy
Changes in ergonomic design

Results:

Upper hand: from 36,1 to 15,3 degrees
Lower hand: from 43,9 to 15,5 degrees

the knob: reduction only in the upper hand

- lighter
- wrist movement is less
- muscular effort is moderate
1.2 Cleaning agents

- Cleaning with less water – reducing wetwork (Feuchtarbeit),
- Cleaning with less agents: only one sanitary cleaner and one alcohol cleaner
- Using less harmful chemicals in the daily work
- Promote dry cleaning with micro fibre cloth
- Reducing daily disinfection for floorcleaning (hospital)
2. Organisational measures
Job enrichment

The mixed work concept:
especially suitable for an aging work force in maintaining its ability to continue working to a high age.

Cleaning combined with tasks out of the areas:

- Home economics
- Administration
- Lab work
- Storage/logistics
- Quality assurance
- Caretaker assistance
- Instruction
Mixed-work (combi-job)
Advantages

Job enrichment at two wards
Shift of home economics services from care to ward service personnel

Cleaning 60%
Material procurement 10%
Meal preparation and distribution 30%

CLEANING WORK ONLY
- High physical strain
- Highly monotonous work
- Status problems

Time →

ENRICHED WORK
- Strain alterations
- Job enrichment
- Increased appreciation

Time →
Advantages of mixed work

• Reducing heavy physical tasks
  • Less routine, less repetitive, monotonous work
    • Strengthening of efficiency, fitness
      • Increased qualification
        • Improved health
          • Still good level of fitness at retirement
            • Satisfaction
3. Profession Specific Rehabilitation

Findings:
• 83% of the rehab. candidates showed pathological findings
• The joints were rarely affected.
• Significant limitation in mobility (20%),
• in the area of the lower spine (42%),
• Joint related symptoms were rarely diagnosed. “

The goal
• early determination for the need of rehabilitation
• specific referral to competent treatment
• occupation specific rehab
• specific reintegration into the work place
Result (88 Patients)

- An early occupation specific rehab. intervention is a building block in maintaining the cleaning personnel’s ability to work until their retirement at age 65 or beyond.

- 90% of the patients who were absent less than 3 months before arriving at the clinic were able to start work after treatment.

- More than 6 months before treatment, 35% could be discharged fit for work again.
4. Qualification/individual resources

4.1 Theoretical Background

• Tell me - and I'll forget it
• Show it me - and I will remember
• Involve me - and I would understand ...

(Attributed to Lao Tse)

Learning phases:

• Motivation
• Information and deepening
• Application and transfer
• Back up and repetition
• Application at the work site
4.2 Training program: Using chemicals

The didactical components and media are e.g.:

**Describing:** worksheets, pictures from hazard symbols
Health hazards, dangerous

**Discussion:** experiments with water, chemicals, cleaning agents, the habits at the work places

**Reasoning:** picture cards, test, puzzle, cross word

**Moving:** handling the cleaning agents

**Reporting:** work sheets, posters, hand outs

**Repeating:** documentation of the facts to do
4.3 Moving with Awareness

Strategy

The goal is to:

• improve movement behaviors through ergonomics awareness
• train the trainers inside the organisation
• coordination, implementation at various worksites
• integrate the concept into work related rehabilitation
• emphazise the need for pre-employment training-program
Motivation: Video

Motivate interest, stimulate observation.

The scenes show people in favourable and unfavourable postures in everyday situations.
Motivation: Worksheets

With the aid of questionnaires the participants grade each cleaning task according to the degree of effort exerted and discomfort experienced.
Impart basic principles

Balance: Building blocks

Teach physical laws and gravity, lead to selfdiscovery
Impart basic principles

Demonstrating the function of the spine

Information about the spine and diseases, the function of the muscles
Enhance body awareness

Experimentation:
Increases awareness of body, space, self critic, change
Improve observation skills

Picture cards

Foster exact differentiation and verbal discussion, stimulate critical debate.
Practise with working equipment

Analysing and improving: e.g. the length of the stick
Practise with working equipment

Analysing and improving: e.g. wet mopping, buffing, vacuuming
Result

The components promote:

• Safe coordination of movements
• Mindful use of the body as a tool
• Observation skills
• Use of occupation related technical terms
• Critical thinking skills
• Self confidence
• Communication skills
• Responsibility

The who, when, where, what and how must be clear to all parties involved
Evaluation

Improved movement (back, arms, legs)

Know more about health

Stimulate individual fitness

Motivate to change lifestyle

Good Practice
5. Project: Good Practice, Lemgo comprehensive approach

- Cleaners in the German town Lemgo – Healthy and efficient employees: Harmonising productivity and comfort

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistics city of Lemgo</th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2007</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sickness days in %</td>
<td>6.8 %</td>
<td>6.6 %</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sickness days per employee</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>17.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees without sickness</td>
<td>29 (out of 93)</td>
<td>34 (out of 92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retired</td>
<td>3: Age in average: 60</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Retired 2009</td>
<td>6: Age in average: 58</td>
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Average: 50 years old

Sickness report city of Lemgo
Aims of the project

• No outsourcing
• Differentiation of performance indices
• No layoffs by the management (but also hiring freeze)
• Improvement of health conditions
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part of the list of adverse conditions perceived strains</th>
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<td>From: Health report AOK, 2008</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ergonomics / equipment</th>
<th>Work environment</th>
<th>Psychosocial strain</th>
<th>Organisation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working in awkward positions</td>
<td>Noise (vacuum cleaner). (children)</td>
<td>Conflicts with users</td>
<td>Repetitive movements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wet work/ High usage of cleaning agents (21 different products)</td>
<td>Adverse climatic conditions</td>
<td>Conflicts with care takers and colleagues</td>
<td>Lacking support</td>
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<td>Unsuitable equipment</td>
<td>Bad air</td>
<td>Work pressure (time, too heavy work loads)</td>
<td>Stand-by employee (compatibility of time for work and time for family)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Movements of loads</td>
<td>Adverse illumination</td>
<td>Monotonous work</td>
<td>Dictated holiday and working times</td>
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<td>Risks through machinery</td>
<td>Confined places</td>
<td>Lack of appreciation</td>
<td>Lack of information lack of receiving appropriate introduction into new job</td>
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Measures

Information

Organisational changes

Changes of the cleaning system: Technique and agents

Selected cleaning agents 2 for maintenance cleaning (before 21 Types)
Selected cleaning agents for the basic cleaning

Breakfast talks, health circle

Purchases:
• Telescope handles (70)
• Lighter flap holders (70)
• Additional cleaning trolleys
• Work jackets (80)
• Single disc machines and water suction machines
• Vacuum cleaners, back pack vacuum cleaners
• Mikro fibre cloths and mops (2000 – 3000 pieces)
• Procurement of industrial washing machines
Changes in wet work

Super simple, clean, fast: about 25 % of the cleaning staff already follows the new guideline

All 21 cleaners were trained regarding the correct use of the cleaning agents.

Were trained how to handle the micro fibre cloth.

Were trained at the worksite how to use the work jackets.
Information and supervision

• Training: Use of cleaning agents

During the three hours course the effects of the acid and alkaline agents was explained and the compatibility with different surface substrates was addressed.

• Moving with Awareness

About half of all cleaning staff (41) has so far attended the courses on body appropriate work methods aiming at improving the individual resources.
6. Summary

A comprehensive approach is important

• To change work organization
• To develop ergonomic equipment and inform the user how to use it.
• To develop and apply new methods
• To use fewer and less harmful products and do less wet work
• To develop sufficient education and training and increase the use of evaluated concepts – like Mowing with Awareness
• To enhance the motivation for the benefits of health and fitness
• And of course to get involved into the planning and furnishing of buildings so that they are suitable for cleaning.