

Example risk assessment for cleaning large retail premises

Setting the scene

Smith's Cleaners (Retail) provide commercial cleaning services to businesses. They employ 100 cleaners, some full-time and others part-time. They have recently won a contract to clean all areas of a supermarket.

Smith's cleaners provide the supermarket with a 24-hour cleaning service, across three shifts: 6.00 am to 2.00 pm (three cleaners on site), 2.00 pm to 10.00 pm (three cleaners on site) and 10.00 pm to 6.00 am (ten cleaners on site). A supervisor is in charge of each shift. If a regular cleaner is sick or on holiday, an agency worker is used. One member of staff has some learning disabilities, and can't read or write.

The day shifts cover the cleaning of toilets, high-maintenance areas such as the butchery and bakery sections, general tidying and litter picking and clearing spillages. The night shift will undertake a full clean of car parks, entrances, machine cleaning of hard floors, offices etc.

The contracts manager did the risk assessment.

How was the risk assessment done?

The manager followed the guidance in *Five steps to risk assessment* (www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg163.pdf).

- 1 To identify the hazards, the manager:
 - looked at HSE's website for free advice and guidance on controlling risks in the cleaning industry (www.hse.gov.uk/cleaning), on health and safety for disabled people and their employers (www.hse.gov.uk/disability) and at www.businesslink.gov.uk for advice and guidance on employing temporary workers;
 - walked the areas where cleaning staff will be going, noting potential risks and taking HSE guidance into account;
 - talked to safety representatives and other staff, including the worker with learning disabilities, to learn from their experience and to take into account everyone's needs;
 - talked to the supermarket managers and agreed issues such as:
 - lines and frequency of communication between the cleaning company and the supermarket;
 - facilities and equipment available to the cleaners, including the amount of storage space available, access to welfare facilities for staff etc;
 - the system for reporting to the supermarket near-miss accidents and risks discovered by cleaners (such as damaged floor tiles) that can cause accidents in the supermarket;
 - the security of cleaning equipment and substances, to ensure only trained cleaners can access and use them; and
 - making sure that all cleaners know what they must do if there is a fire.
- 2 The manager wrote down who could be harmed by the hazards and how.
- 3 For each hazard, the manager wrote down what controls, if any, were in place to manage these hazards. These controls were then compared to the good practice guidance set out in HSE's publications and website. Where existing controls were not considered good enough, the manager wrote down what else needed to be done to control the risk.
- 4 The manager discussed the findings of the risk assessment with the staff, making sure they understood the risks of the job and how these risks would be controlled and monitored. He also asked a supervisor to go through the risk assessment with the man with learning difficulties, to make sure he fully understood what it contained and what he had to do. He put a copy of the risk assessment up in the staff room for all staff to see and made it part of the induction process for new staff, including agency workers. Putting the risk assessment into practice, the manager decided to tackle the most important things first. He decided when actions would be done by, and who would do them. As each action was completed, it was ticked off the plan.
- 5 The manager decided to review and update the risk assessment every year, or straightaway if there were major changes in the workplace – including in the use of equipment or chemicals.

Company name: Smith's Cleaners (Retail)

Date of risk assessment: 1/8/07

What are the hazards?	Who might be harmed and how?	What are you already doing?	What further action is necessary?	Action by who?	Action by when?	Done
Slips, trips and falls	Staff and others, including the public, risk injuries such as fractures and bruising if they trip over objects, or slip on spillages or on wet floors, and fall.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The right cleaning equipment is used for the right job, and staff follow safe systems of work. ■ Anti-slip matting at entrances. ■ Staff monitor entrances for wet floor surfaces walked in. ■ Spillages cleared up immediately, according to agreed procedures, and the floor left dry. ■ Staff do not leave cleaning materials/equipment unattended. ■ Most cleaning machines used have no trailing cables. ■ For machines with cables, cleaners use socket nearest to where they are working and use hazard cones to warn others. ■ Supermarket staff grit outside areas to provide safe walkways in snowy/icy weather. ■ All areas well lit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Periodic toolbox talks from supervisor to raise awareness of risk of slips and trips. 	Shift supervisors – at least once every 8 weeks	7/8/07	6/8/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff that, if appropriate, small spillages can be cleaned dry using absorbent paper towels. 	Shift supervisors	7/8/07	6/8/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cleaners reminded to wear sensible shoes, eg flat shoes with a good grip. 	Shift supervisors	7/8/07	6/8/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind cleaners to report any uneven floor surfaces, inside or out, to their supervisor (who reports it to the supermarket for repair). 	Shift supervisors	7/8/07	6/8/07
Contact with bleach and other cleaning chemicals	Staff risk getting skin problems such as dermatitis, and eye damage, from direct contact with bleach and other cleaning chemicals, eg solvents and detergents. Vapour may cause breathing problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Long-handled mops/brushes, and appropriate gloves, provided and staff trained in their use. ■ All staff trained in the risks, use and storage of cleaning chemicals and wear personal protective equipment as instructed. ■ Cleaning chemicals marked 'irritant' substituted, where possible, for milder alternatives. ■ Cleaning machines designed to minimise handling of cleaning chemicals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff reminded to report any health problems they think may come from cleaning, and to check for dry, red or itchy skin on their hands. 	Supervisors	7/8/07	6/8/07
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff reminded to wash gloves and aprons after use. 	Supervisors	7/8/07	6/8/07

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Musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) and injuries	Staff risk problems such as back pain if they try to lift objects that are heavy and/or awkward to carry, such as cleaning machines or heavy waste bags, or if they are required to often work in awkward postures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ All staff trained in lifting safely. ■ Staff using cleaning machines fully trained in their use. ■ Trolleys provided for moving bags of waste and staff use them. ■ Staff do not overfill bags and buckets. ■ Rubbish skip emptied daily by sub-contractors meaning waste bags are not stacked high. ■ Mopping systems have a long-handled wringer, and a bucket on wheels to reduce lifting and carrying. ■ Long-handled mops, brushes and litter pickers provided to reduce need to stretch and stoop. ■ Cleaning machines stored near point of use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to tell supervisor if a trolley has defective wheels so it can be taken out of use. 	Supervisors	7/8/07	6/8/07
Work at height, eg high cleaning of windows and fascias	Staff risk bruising and fracture injuries if they fall from any height.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 'No ladders' policy. ■ All high-level cleaning done by trained staff working from floor level, using telescopic poles with cleaning tools attached. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No further action needed at this stage. 			
Machine cleaning of internal and external (eg car park, delivery zones and shopping aisles) floor areas	Staff and others risk injury from improper use of the machine, eg if the machine were to buck and hit feet or ankles, or if careless driving results in a pedestrian being struck.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Machines provided are the right ones for the job. ■ Cleaners trained in the safe use of machines. ■ Pre-use checks done for damaged plugs, cables and on/off switches. ■ Machines regularly examined and maintained by a competent person. ■ Delivery bays/car park areas only swept at night, when there is much less traffic. ■ Staff wear hi-viz clothing when working outside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cleaners reminded that if they have doubts about the safety of a machine, they are not to use it and to inform their supervisor immediately. 	Supervisor	7/8/07	6/8/07
Verbal abuse or assault	Staff may suffer verbal abuse, and possibly assault, from members of the public and others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained to provide a good, polite service that takes account of customers and others needs. ■ Staff trained in dealing with difficult and/or confrontational situations. ■ Staff report all instances of abuse. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supervisors reminded to investigate all instances of abuse and inform contract manager of findings and action taken. 	Manager	7/8/07	4/8/07

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Motor vehicles and lift trucks	Staff cleaning external areas where there is vehicle movement (eg car parks, delivery bays) risk serious injury if struck by a motor vehicle or a lift truck.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained in on-site vehicle safety, including safe systems of work used by supermarket staff. ■ Car parks and delivery areas are only cleaned at night, when there is much less traffic. ■ External areas are all well lit. ■ Walkways in external areas marked, and staff use them. ■ Hi-viz tabards worn by all staff working outside. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supervisors to ensure that agency staff are briefed on pedestrian safety before they work outside. 	Supervisors	As necessary	
Electrical	Staff risk electric shocks or burns from faulty electrical equipment or installation, or from misuse of electrical appliances.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained to perform pre-use checks on cables, switches and sockets before using electrical appliances. ■ Electrical installation tested and maintained by competent people according to a planned schedule. ■ Staff trained in basic electrical safety, eg not to splash water near sockets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Remind staff to do pre-use checks before using electrical appliances. 	Supervisors	7/8/07	6/8/07
Extremes of weather	Staff working outside may suffer discomfort and possibly ill health from exposure to cold, wet weather.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Suitable personal protective equipment provided for staff working outdoors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No further action needed at this stage. 			
Collecting sharp waste	Staff picking litter in the car park risk potentially serious injury from sharp objects, including discarded needles. Staff cleaning toilets at risk from same.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Staff trained in safe systems of work and provided with suitable tools (litter pickers) and personal protective equipment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pin up a notice in the staff room reminding staff of dangers from sharp objects. 	Manager	7/8/07	4/8/07
Charging and storage of batteries	Staff risk burns from contact with battery acid when charging batteries.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Only authorised, trained staff do this job, wearing suitable personal protective equipment and following a safe system of work. ■ Well-ventilated area provided for charging. ■ Safe storage area for spare motive power batteries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Put up a sign setting out the charging procedure at the charging point. 	Manager	31/08/07	9/08/07

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Lack of awareness of risk by staff	Staff, particularly temporary staff from an agency, are at risk if they are not aware of the risks on site and how those risks are controlled.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Risk assessment discussed with all staff and a copy pinned up in staff room. ■ Temps are briefed on safety by supervisor before beginning work. ■ Temporary staff agency provides only staff who speak good English. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ No further action needed at this stage. 			
Fire	If trapped, staff could suffer fatal injuries from smoke inhalation/burns.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Supermarket company has done a fire risk assessment (www.fire.gov.uk/Workplace+safety) and taken necessary action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continue to co-operate with supermarket to ensure that all the actions identified as necessary are done. 			

Assessment review date: 1/8/08