



Welcome to this edition of *Occupational Health Watch*, an update of recent activities of the California Department of Public Health's Occupational Health Branch (OHB).

Focus on...**Cleaning Products Can Cause Asthma**

A 37-year-old teacher developed new asthma at her workplace. She worked in an area where custodians used cleaning products at full strength instead of mixing them with water, as the label required. She now has asthma symptoms made worse by many different chemicals.

A 43-year-old high school custodian started having breathing problems when he used chemicals to clean the bathrooms and strip floor wax at work. It took a year for him to be diagnosed with asthma. He finally had to leave his job because of his asthma.

These are just two of the many California workers whose asthma was caused or made worse by cleaning products. Cleaning products are used in all workplaces and can cause or trigger work-related asthma. The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) has found that one in 10 workers reporting work-related asthma associate their symptoms with cleaning products.

Work-related asthma can have serious consequences. The CDPH [Work-Related Asthma Prevention Program \(WRAPP\)](#) has produced a [Cleaning Products and Work-Related Asthma fact sheet](#) and other materials to protect workers from asthma. The materials discuss using safer products and cleaning methods, including guidance on how to select safer cleaning products and avoid 'greenwashed' products that are falsely marketed as safe.

Please share WRAPP materials with employers and workers in schools, offices, hospitals and other workplaces where cleaning products are used. Links to these materials are below:

- [Cleaning Products and Work-Related Asthma \(PDF\)](#)
- [Cleaning for Healthier Schools - Infection Control Handbook \(PDF\)](#)
- Webinar: [How to Pilot a Green Cleaning Program in Your School District](#)
- [Cleaning for Asthma Safe Schools Project](#)

Additional Information on green cleaning and finding safer products:

- [The Green Cleaning Toolkit](#) – Green Schools Initiative
- [Purchasing Safer Cleaning Products](#) – look for GS-37, GS-52, and GS-53 Green Seal certified products.
- [EcoLogo](#) – look for CCD-146 EcoLogo certified hardsurface cleaners
- [Cleaning for Health Fact Sheets](#) – Informed Green Solutions

OHB is dedicated to improving worker health and safety through prevention activities. We gather information on job hazards, work with others to test new approaches to prevent worker injury and illness, and assist with making changes at the workplace. For more information, visit our website: <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/ohb>.

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