

## DOMESTIC SERVICES SAFE WORKING PRACTICES GUIDELINES

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### CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION
2. USE OF ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT
3. POLISHING AND SCRUBBER MACHINES
4. WET FLOORS
5. WET CLEANING EQUIPMENT
6. DRY SUCTION CLEANING
7. CROSS INFECTION
8. DISINFECTANTS
9. CLEANING MATERIALS
10. KITCHENS/FOOD HANDLING
11. HEALTH & HYGIENE IN FOOD PREPARATION AREAS
12. HIGH LEVEL WORK
13. LIFTING AND CARRYING
14. PESTS
15. SMOKING
16. FIRE PRECAUTIONS
17. HAZARD REPORTING
18. CONCLUSION



## **1. ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING**

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All DRH premises must be cleaned to the highest possible standards.

A clear component of providing consistently high quality cleaning is the presence of a clear plan, which will set out all aspects of the cleaning service.

All cleaning rota's must be strictly adhered to, and monitored by the Manager.

The plan must clearly define the roles and responsibilities of all staff involved, from managers through care staff to domestic staff

## **2. USE OF ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT**

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Check electrical equipment before use for frayed cords, breaks and defective plugs.

Ensure switches are in the "off" position before connecting plugs to outlets.

In the case of overheating, sparking or smoking motors turn off the power supply and report the defect to your manager. Ensure the equipment is labeled, identifying the fault, and remove it from use. Under no circumstances should the equipment be used again until checked and repaired by a competent person.

When disconnecting a plug from an outlet pull firmly on the plug, not on the lead.

Do not use electrical equipment or activate electrical circuits with wet hands.

Do not attempt to repair defective wiring or other electrical equipment parts; report any defective equipment to your manager or shift leader.

Never attempt to remove any part of a machine such as a brush or pad-drive while the machine is connected to the power supply. Switch off at the mains and remove the plug from the socket first.

Plug into the nearest socket in the area in which you are working, thereby minimizing the possibility of an accident by other persons tripping over the trailing cable. Never leave machines unattended and connected to the power supply. Switch off, remove the plug and move the machine to a position well away from the circulation area.

**Never overload electrical sockets by the use of adapters.**

Change the power point before the cable is fully stretched to avoid wrenching wires from the plug. Whenever it is possible to do so, it is advisable to work backwards towards the power point.

## **3. CARPET CLEANERS, POLISHING MACHINES**

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Adjust the handle to a comfortable arm's length and keep your body squarely behind the machine. The handle should never be adjusted while the machine is being operated.

Relax when using the machine. Do not grip the handle tensely. To change the direction of movement it is necessary to raise or lower the handles by as little as half an inch, or even less depending on the type of machine. (This applies to single brush machines only. For all other machines refer to manufacturer's instructions.)

Keep the cable clear of the machine by working backwards towards the power supply. Looping the cable over your shoulder will also help you to achieve this.

The use of long extension cables should be avoided as far as possible as their use reduces the power supply to the motor. Overloading may also be caused by pads clogged with dirt or polish.

Do not use rotary polishing machines in crowded areas without the authority of the Home Manager, and until you are experienced and confident.

Wipe the cable clean, coil it correctly and remove the pad-drive or brush from the machine after use.

#### **4. WET FLOORS**

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Accidents can be caused to service users, visitors or staff by falls due to wet or greasy floors. To reduce the risk of this type of accident use as little water as possible when mopping, scrubbing or stripping floors, and display warning signs. If possible, dry access to the area should always be left for staff and visitors, for instance, when scrubbing a corridor scrub one half first leaving the other half as a dry passage.

Consideration should be given to cleaning/mopping of floors, especially in communal areas, outside busy times or perhaps when service users are in bed.

#### **5. WET CLEANING EQUIPMENT**

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All wet cleaning equipment, hot water extraction machines and wet suction cleaners must be cleaned after use and stored dry as they may otherwise provide a breeding ground for bacteria, which multiply rapidly in the ideal conditions they have found. Mops should be thoroughly washed, squeezed dry and stored head uppermost. Every attempt should be made to ensure that mop heads are left or allowed to dry as quickly as possible. The appropriate colour-coding of cleaning equipment must be used for the area they are designated.

The aim of colour coding is to prevent cross contamination.

It is vital that training the colour coding system, forms part of the induction training or continuous training program

- Red- Sanitary appliances and washroom floors
- Blue - General use
- Yellow - Washroom rooms
- Green - Kitchens
- White - Isolation Rooms

## **6. DRY SUCTION CLEANING**

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Properly designed vacuum cleaners should reduce the bacterial contamination on smooth floors by at least 95%. To achieve this level of efficiency, the dust bags must be changed at least once a week and more frequently in more used areas. The machines must also be kept scrupulously clean, including the brushes and instruments used in the vacuuming process.

## **7. CROSS INFECTION**

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Service users are on occasions in a physical condition which seriously impairs their resistance to disease. This makes them very much more susceptible to germs. A high standard of cleaning is vitally important in reducing cross-infection.

## **8. DISINFECTANTS**

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All disinfectants are poisonous and must, therefore, be stored in a safe place, preferably under lock and key. Their use should be controlled by ensuring Coshh assessments have been completed, together with a safe working practice for each product. All cleaning chemicals should be returned to the locked Coshh/storage cupboard after use.

## **9. CLEANING MATERIALS**

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Many cleaning materials in use contain chemicals which are potentially dangerous if not used correctly. These must therefore be used strictly in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. Your Coshh information file should be checked for information before using unfamiliar products, identifying any necessary precautions.

All cleaning materials used should be kept in containers which are labeled correctly with the contents and any first aid treatment necessary. Any chemicals not labeled correctly should be reported to the Home Manager immediately, and removed from use. Where very strong cleaning materials are used, it is advisable to wear protective gloves at all times to prevent burns or irritation to the skin, and special care must be taken to prevent the chemicals coming into contact with the eyes.

All domestic services/hotel services staff must read the Coshh file for safe use and storage of cleaning chemicals.

## **10. KITCHENS/FOOD HANDLING**

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Cleanliness in kitchens is essential to prevent the spread of potentially harmful bacteria.

Crockery and cutlery should be washed thoroughly in hot water and rinsed to allow to air dry where possible. If suitable racks are not available, dry with paper toweling or with a clean, fresh tea towel. Where automatic dishwashers are installed they should be used in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Any faults with this equipment should be reported to your Home Manager.

Chipped and broken crockery is an infection hazard and should be withdrawn from use.

Never leave kettles or pots containing boiling liquids near edges where they can easily be knocked over.

Saucepan handles should always point inwards but never left over heated rings/plates.

Do not clean ovens or hot plates whilst they are switched on and before they cool down. Goggles should be worn along with gloves when cleaning ovens with strong chemicals, to avoid splashes to the eyes, and absorption. Adequate ventilation must also be assured when using strong chemicals.

When operating water boilers, take care to keep hands well away from taps and jets.

To avoid the risk of scalding, kettles should be filled through the spout.

Protect your hands when removing containers from ovens, hot places and heated food trays.

All disposable cloths should be disposed of daily or after each meal. All tea towels should be disposed of as soon as they are too wet to use.

All staff handling food should hold the basic Food Hygiene Certificate of the Institute of Environmental Health Officers and follow safe handling procedures to ensure that there is the least possible risk of food poisoning or cross infection from food routines. Training must be updated every 3 years.

## **11. HEALTH & HYGIENE IN FOOD PREPARATION AREAS**

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Hands should be washed frequently and especially before and after handling food and after using toilet facilities.

Long hair should be tied back.

Open-top shoes or sandals should not be worn, to reduce the risk of injury to feet through spilled liquid and falling equipment. For safety wear low-heeled shoes.

Protective clothing should be worn and changed as often as necessary to reduce the risk of spreading infection.

Cuts and abrasions should be covered – when involved in food preparation blue plasters from the first aid box should be used.

## **12. HIGH LEVEL WORK**

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If you are required to work at a level beyond your reach, for instance to hang curtains, follow the safe working practice identified by the risk assessment, for working at height, only use properly designated safety steps. A second member of staff must steady the steps at the bottom.

### **13. LIFTING AND CARRYING**

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Avoid bending, stooping or twisting, especially when supporting any weight. Appropriate lifting and handling techniques can make manual handling activities relatively safe. Since the strongest muscles in the body are in the legs, followed by the arms, these sets of muscles should be used as much as possible for all lifting and carrying operations, and the back muscles as little as possible.

To lift an object from a low position, stand as close to the object as possible, with your feet shoulder width apart, sink down, bending at the knees as far as is comfortable. After testing the weight of the object, if it is safe, raise the head to help maintain the natural curves of the spine. The move must be powered by the leg muscles not the back. Hold the object close to your center of gravity.

Always use your leg and arm muscles as much as possible, never your back muscles, when pushing/pulling or performing any manual handling task.

Never attempt to lift objects that are too heavy for you – always ask for assistance and, if lifting equipment is provided, use it.

Do not provide assistance to delivery men asking for help with delivering a heavy object that you would not normally be expected to lift.

### **14. PESTS**

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Always report the presence of pests to the Home Manager.

### **15 SMOKING**

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Always check the Smoking Policy for your home.

Staff members are not permitted to smoke inside any DRH building.

### **16. FIRE PRECAUTIONS**

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Fires can be caused by:

- Electrical faults, such as faulty sockets or electrical appliances, the overloading of a socket or the use of a machine with a defective flex or plug
- The natural combustion of refuse not properly disposed of
- Gas burners and naked flames, especially in kitchens
- Cigarette ends and matches

Every member of staff should be alert to these dangers and must take action to avoid the outbreak of fire. It is important to:

- Attend a fire lecture annually and complete the fire awareness forms
- Participate in a fire drill at least annually
- Familiarise yourself with the Fire Risk Assessment
- Read and understand the Fire Action Plan
- Memorise the position of the fire-fighting equipment nearest to the area in which you work, and familiarise yourself with the different types of fire extinguisher
- Learn to identify the fire alarm and in the event of fire and take action in accordance with the proper procedures

## **17. HAZARD REPORTING**

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It is the duty of all staff to report any defects that could cause an accident, eg: frayed carpets, loose tiles, overheating cables, etc.

## **18. IN CONCLUSION**

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The standard of cleanliness and safety in Care Homes will depend on the skill care and dedication of the staff.

Staff carrying out domestic duties provide a vital role in ensuring a safe, hygienic atmosphere for service users, staff and visitors.

## **REFERENCES**

Department of Health Infection Control Guidance for Care Homes 2006

