



OH&S TIP SHEET

Health and Safety in Early Childhood Services

Chemicals hazard management

Occupational Health and Safety laws state that the employer has the responsibility to carry out the hazard management steps.

Some key risk controls that an employer must institute are:

- Ensuring that the cleaners or contracted cleaning company abides by these requirements. This means the chemical register has to be updated if the cleaner plans to store chemicals at the service, and keep the service updated of changes to chemicals and removal of superseded ones.
- Communicating clearly to employees which chemicals are acceptable to be stored and used onsite by the employer, parents and employees.
- Communicating clearly that chemicals should not be brought into the service, unless endorsed by the employer.
- Keeping chemical storage and use to a minimum and, where possible, purchasing less hazardous or dangerous alternatives.
- Purchasing smaller quantities only of chemicals – for example, less than 5 litres – in consumer packages rather than larger containers, which

increase manual handling and chemical hazards when decanting is carried out.

- Ensuring chemicals are kept locked away from children and visitors when not in use, and kept secure by the person using them when they are in use.
- Keeping chemical storage away from food handling and storage areas.
- Ensuring all containers of hazardous substances/ dangerous goods supplied are clearly labelled with the manufacturer's label.
- Where possible, avoiding the use of other containers, and always totally avoiding the reuse of food containers to store chemicals.
- Setting up a chemical register. This should preferably be established and maintained in consultation with an employee representative.

It should also involve consultation with the contractor cleaning company.

- Applying hazard management steps (otherwise known as a risk assessment) to consider

risks to health and safety (refer to Systematic approach to managing OHS in section 4 of the ELAA Early Childhood Management Manual). This could be as simple as following the guidance in this section.

- Ensuring employees are provided with information, instruction, training and supervision so that they can use the chemicals without harming their health and safety, or compromise the health and safety of others. This could be as simple as ensuring not only they read, understand and follow the guidance on the label or in the MSDS, but also they know what to do if there is a fire, spill or first aid incident involving the chemical.

The 2001 WorkSafe Victoria publication 'A step-by-step guide for managing chemicals in the workplace' is an excellent resource if employers would like further practical guidance on chemical safety.