CAUSATIVE AGENT:

SKIN IRRITANT

DEFINITION

Activities where a worker's hands are: in liquids more than 2 hours per shift, washed more than 20 times per shift, or in water-resistant gloves (e.g. rubber or plastic) more than 2 hours per shift.

SECTORS: Agriculture, industrial manufacturing, service.

JOBS

Agriculture

Abattoir worker, baler, barn worker, beekeeper, cleaner/custodian, crop worker, dairy farmer, fisherman diver, florist, gardener, greenhouse worker, grounds keeper, landscaper, nursery worker, pesticide applicator, rancher, yard cleaner

Industrial Manufacturing

Assembler/fabricator (e.g. aircraft, automotive, electronic), boiler operator, cleaner/custodian, electroplater, evaporator operator, food/beverage production worker, foundry worker, jeweler/precious stone worker, metal worker/machinist (e.g. cutters, die caster, driller, grinder, solderer, welder, plater), pharmaceutical production worker, tannery worker, textile worker (e.g. dyer)

Service

Aesthetician, animal groomer, artist, automobile mechanic, baker, barber, bartender, brewer, butcher, carpet cleaner, caterer, cleaner/custodian, cook, cosmetologist, dishwasher, drycleaner, embalmer, film/photo finishing workers, fishmonger, fitness centre worker (e.g. aquafitness instructor, personal trainer), floor polisher, garage worker, grocer, hairdresser, homemaker, hotel housekeeper, kitchen porter, launderer, lifeguard, massage therapist, nail salon technician, non-performance personnel (e.g. special effects technician, production crew, sound technician), painter, pet groomer, pool cleaner/service technician, plumber, swimming instructor, watersports instructor

HEALTH EFFECTS

Irritant contact dermatitis: a skin rash triggered by over-exposure to water, solvents, friction, or contact with irritating substances (e.g. soaps, detergents)

HOW COMMON ARE THE HEALTH EFFECTS?

- Wet work was the cause of contact dermatitis for:
 - 49.0% of cleaners and housekeepers
 - 44.4% of bar staff
 - 35.7% of catering assistants
 - 32.5% of glass and ceramic makers
 - 24.7% of chefs and cooks
 - 20.9% of bakers
 - 13.6% of hairdressers and barbers
 - 12.8% of kitchen porters
 - 9.4% of food processors
 - 8.1% of florists

KEY PREVENTION STRATE-GIES

Substitution

 Use mild skin care products (i.e. mild soap for cleansing, mild detergent for industrial cleaning, waterless hand cleanser for oil and grease removal)



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KEY PREVENTION STRATEGIES (CONTINUED)

Engineering Controls

• Use tools to prevent direct contact with irritants

Administrative Controls

- Provide training on proper glove use (i.e. use cotton liners with nitrile gloves)
- Provide training on skin care (i.e. apply moisturizing cream after washing hands, at the end of a shift, and before bed; apply cream to the spaces between the fingers)
- Provide training on hand hygiene (i.e. use lukewarm water, avoid hot; use alcohol-based hand rubs when the hands are not visibly soiled; avoid industrial hand cleaners containing pumice)
- Job/task rotation (i.e. distribute wet work exposure among workers so no one is burdened with constant wet work)

Personal Protective Equipment

• Avoid gloves made from natural rubber latex (consult manufacturer; if necessary, use low-protein and powder-free styles)

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- Frequent hand washing as well as repeated physical abrasion (rubbing) of the skin can cause workers to develop contact dermatitis
- Trace amounts of irritants (e.g. detergent, soap, water) can collect under jewelry or inside gloves (if donned incorrectly) and affect the skin's condition
 - Avoid wearing rings at work
 - Wash and dry your hands well before you put on gloves as well as after removing them
 - Check for holes or wear and tear before wearing gloves
 - When removing gloves, avoid touching the outside portions that may be contaminated or dirty

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