

Voluntary Industry Guidelines

**to Protect the Health
and Safety of Domestic
Workers and Day
Laborers**

SB321 Advisory Committee
Make the Home a Safe Workplace

Voluntary Guidelines to Protect the Health and Safety of Domestic Workers and Day Laborers: *Make the Home a Safe Workplace*

Introduction

Each day, hundreds of thousands of domestic workers and day laborers go to work at homes in California – working as house cleaners, nannies, caregivers, and as day laborers hired for a variety of jobs, including cleaning, gardening and landscaping, painting, demolition, moving and hauling, and other light construction tasks in a home. These Guidelines for the household services industry describe how employers can make the home a safe workplace to protect workers from injury and illness on the job. The Guidelines include steps tailored for the home environment and describe how to prepare ahead of time and provide the necessary equipment and training workers need to carry out the jobs safely.

The home is a workplace – Once a person hires someone to come to their home to carry out a job, the house becomes a workplace and the employer has a responsibility to ensure it is a safe place to work. In fact, when steps are taken to protect workers, there is also a benefit for the health and safety of the employers, their families, and others who live in the home.

Workers experience injuries – Domestic workers and day laborers experience job-related injuries and illnesses, most of which can be prevented. These injuries and illnesses include:

- Sprains, strains or tears – from repetitive work, lifting heavy items, awkward postures
- Fractures, cuts or wounds, or bruises – often due to falls from ladders or other heights, “slips and trips”, or use of power tools
- Skin and eye irritation, breathing difficulties, and asthma – from the use of cleaning products and other chemicals
- Heat exhaustion and heat stroke – from working in hot environments, often without cool, potable water
- Stress and emotional toll – from heavy workloads and time pressure, mistreatment by employers, long hours, and lack of secure employment.

These industry guidelines were developed by the SB321 Advisory Committee to fulfill the requirements of SB321, *Employment safety standards: advisory committee: household domestic services* (Labor Code Section 6305.1). SB321 called for Cal/OSHA to convene an advisory committee composed of key stakeholders in this industry, with the goal of developing voluntary industry-specific guidelines to educate household domestic service employers and workers, and of providing policy recommendations to protect the health and safety of privately-funded household domestic service employees. December 2022

Workers have rights – Domestic workers and day laborers are protected by law. They have rights to:

- Raise concerns, make suggestions about working conditions, and report an injury. It is illegal to retaliate against or in any way punish a worker for doing so. Illegal retaliation includes firing the worker, reducing their hours, threatening deportation, or giving them less desirable tasks. For more information, go to the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement [DLSE site](#).
- Minimum wage, breaks, overtime, and sick time. Different overtime rules apply depending on the work performed and whether or not the worker lives in the home. For more information, go to the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement [DLSE site](#).
- Work in an environment free of sexual harassment or harassment based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, disability, age (age 40 or older) or genetic information. For more information, go to the Civil Rights Department [CRD site](#).
- Workers' compensation benefits (including medical care) if injured on the job. Employers need to have workers' compensation insurance, and workers have a right to this coverage if they worked at least 52 hours for the same person in the last 90 days AND earned at least \$100 for their work. For more information, go to the Division of Workers' Compensation [DWC site](#).

How to Use These Guidelines

Employers and workers both play important roles – An effective safety plan includes open communication and collaboration between employers and workers in order for the program to succeed. It is best when both work together to identify hazards and possible solutions and to jointly resolve any problems that may arise. Share this approach with everyone the worker will interact with while working in the home. It is important to promote a culture where safety is prioritized and workers feel comfortable reporting problems and sharing concerns and to address language access by providing information and resources in the language workers best understand.

- **Employers:** These Guidelines are directed towards employers as the primary audience, since they have control over the home environment and have a responsibility to ensure measures are in place to protect workers. Review the guidelines and engage the workers you have hired in identifying potential risks and ways to stay safe.
- **Workers:** Review the Guidelines to see what types of equipment and training and other steps would keep you safe from different hazards. Bring these to your employer to talk about ways to make the job safer.

The Guidelines are organized into two main sections:

A. Planning for prevention – before work begins: Includes steps to think about in advance so that both the employer and worker are ready when work begins.

B. Common hazards and guidelines to protect workers: Includes the most common hazards domestic workers and day laborers can face and describes measures to keep workers safe.

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A. Planning for prevention – before work begins:

1. Agree on tasks and hours

- a. Talk with the worker about the expectations, job duties, hours, and pay. Once you have reviewed the priorities, the worker can help develop an estimate of the hours and what is feasible based on the tasks involved and the detail and intensity of the work. The work context is diverse – while many workers may have long-term relationships with an employer, others may be hired for a day. These conversations help to prevent health problems and injuries related to excessive workload and pace of work, as workers would be able to review job duties and provide feedback on how much can realistically be accomplished within a certain amount of time.
 - Use a written agreement or contract, signed by you and the worker, to make sure that both agree on the expectations and are clear on the tasks, responsibilities, and number of hours. This should be a “living document” that you use to check-in regularly to assess if it is working well for both of you. Any changes to the tasks or scope of work should be made in writing. See these sample work agreements from Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network:
 - Nanny Agreement: <https://domesticemployers.org/resource/california-nanny-work-agreement/>
 - Homecare/attendant agreement: <https://domesticemployers.org/resource/california-home-attendant-work-agreement/>
 - Housecleaner agreement: <https://domesticemployers.org/resource/california-house-cleaner-work-agreement/>
 - Specify timing of regularly scheduled breaks and lunch. Legally, most workers, with the exception of [personal attendants](#), must receive a paid 10-minute break for every 4 hours of work, and a 30-minute uninterrupted unpaid lunch break after no more than 5 hours of work.
- b. Let the worker know if other people will be in the household while they are there. This helps the worker know what their workplace is going to look like and with whom they may interact. Talk about any special considerations, for example any areas of the house to avoid or, in the case of house cleaners, not to clean. Provide instructions if there are any valuables or special belongings in the home.

2. Review information on workers' rights

- a. Confirm that you both understand workers have these rights:
- Right to raise concerns and make suggestions about the working conditions and report an injury, without retaliation. For more information, go to the [DLSE site](#).
 - Right to minimum wage, breaks, overtime, and sick time. Different break and overtime rules apply depending on the work performed and on whether or not the worker lives in the home. For more information, go to the [DLSE site](#).
 - Right to work in an environment free of sexual harassment or harassment based on race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), national origin, disability, age (age 40 or older) or genetic information. For more information, go to the [DFEH site](#).
 - Right to medical care and workers' compensation benefits if injured on the job (workers have a right to this coverage if they worked at least 52 hours for the same person in the last 90 days AND earned at least \$100 for their work). For more information, go to the [DWC site](#).
 - Other resources on workers' rights:
 - Hand in Hand: Legal FAQs for Employers <https://domesticemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/CA-Legal-FAQchecklist-.pdf>
 - California Domestic Workers Coalition: Know Your Rights <https://www.cadomesticworkers.org/know-your-rights/>
 - Cal/OSHA – [Workers' Rights](#) (Poster 9 in Working Safer and Easier poster series for janitors and housekeepers), in English and Spanish
- b. Agree on how you will communicate with one another about schedules or tasks – whether you will be in touch via the telephone, text, in-person, or other. Schedule check-ins on a regular schedule.
- c. Recognize that some tasks are outside the scope of what domestic workers and day laborers regularly do and should not be expected without a further assessment. These may require special equipment or training or may be tasks the worker chooses not to do. For example, this may include some specialized tasks in providing care to children, older people, or people with disabilities or may be related to a worker's comfort level with some extracurricular activities such as swimming.

Workers should not be expected to clear out rodent or pest infestations, clean mold or soot and ash from wildfire smoke, trim tall trees, do work on roofs, or other types of construction work that require specialized equipment and training. (Note that in California, if the cost of construction or renovation is \$500 or more, the [job may require a licensed contractor unless there is an owner-builder](#).) .

3. Identify, evaluate, and control hazards

Most job-related injuries and illnesses can be prevented, and the steps of identifying, evaluating, and controlling hazards are the foundation of a good program to make the home a safe workplace. In a conventional workplace in California, employers are responsible for developing an *Injury and Illness Prevention Plan* which describes how they will implement the following steps. Domestic employers should develop a similar safety plan describing how they are going to accomplish these steps in the home.

- a. **Identify hazards or “what can hurt workers.”** This can involve doing a walk-through of the areas where the worker will be, thinking ahead of time about the tasks that will be carried out, and looking for what could injure or harm a worker.
 - Involve the workers in this step as they have first-hand knowledge of the tasks and can provide good feedback.
 - Note the full range of hazards on the job, both the ones that are easily visible, such as a broken ladder or faulty electrical wire, and others that may impact a worker in the long-term, such as awkward postures or toxic chemicals.
- b. **Put in place solutions to “control” hazards.** Assess what changes, equipment, and supplies are needed to make the home a safe space. There are various solutions or measures that can be used to protect employees. Talk about these with the workers and ask for their input to come up with solutions that are appropriate and protective.

Not all solutions are equally effective. Those that remove or reduce the hazard are more effective than personal protective equipment, because they can make the workplace itself safer. Often a combination of methods offers the best protection:

- First, think about ways to remove the hazard, such as replacing toxic chemicals with safer ones, or using equipment for lifting and carrying. This makes the workplace safer and ensures all workers are protected.
- If that is not possible, think about how to do the work more safely, such as using safer techniques or getting help for lifting, having access to water and shade if it's hot, or other changes that reduce the risk.
- Last, determine whether any personal protective equipment or PPE (items worn on the body such as gloves, masks, kneepads, etc.) is needed. You should pay for any PPE that is necessary to protect the safety of workers. If PPE is necessary:
 - Select sizes that fit the worker and review why they should wear it
 - Train workers on the proper use of PPE, how to dispose of it, and where to get replacements

- Encourage the worker to wear shoes that provide support and are non-slip. Foot protection is important to prevent slip-and-falls and injury from objects. Do not ask workers to remove their shoes to work in the home or, alternatively, provide the worker with adequate, comfortable, indoor-only shoes.

In Section B, there are suggestions for ways to address specific hazards, and each section includes ways to eliminate or reduce the hazard, as well as personal protective equipment if applicable.

- c. **Evaluate hazards and the solutions that are put in place.** Carry out periodic inspections of the home and encourage workers to share any symptoms or problems. If a worker has an injury or reports symptoms, look for the source and investigate why it happened. Make changes to prevent further injuries.

4. Ensure workers are trained and receive information in language they understand.

Before work begins, workers should receive training on health and safety as well as specific information on the work tasks and equipment in each home. The training and resources should be offered during paid time and be in the language workers understand. In Section B, there are specific tips for what to cover in training for different types of hazards, focusing on ways to work safely. Community and worker organizations may also be able to provide resources for training (see Section C, “Other Resources.”)

- a. Once you both agree on the tasks, review the ways in which you are making sure the work can be done safely (see Section C for suggestions for specific hazards).
- b. Depending on the job task, also consider whether other training is needed, such as CPR or first aid, or other topics related to caregiving, such as how to safely move or transfer a consumer, or ways to work effectively and diffuse challenging situations with people with dementia or mental health issues.
- c. Assess what workers are able to do or not do, and encourage them to share any concerns about assigned job tasks or any physical limitations that may require accommodations or modifications of tasks.

5. Encourage workers to report hazards, unsafe conditions, and any injuries or illnesses. Confirm how you will communicate with each other.

- a. Talk to the worker about the importance of protecting their health and safety and let them know you encourage their input. Ask them to let you know if they see any potential hazards or unsafe conditions, or if they experience any health symptoms that could be work-related. Effective and respectful communication is important to

create a culture that promotes safety. In addition, the law protects workers from any retaliation when they bring up concerns about unsafe working conditions.

- b. Create an environment for effective two-way communication, so the worker feels comfortable reporting problems and sharing concerns. Agree on how you will communicate, whether by in-person check-ins, phone, or text. Plan regular check-ins that prompt this type of communication.
- c. If you and the worker speak different languages, you can use different tools to communicate. Talk with the worker about what interpretation aids they already use or what would work for them. For example:
 - Plan a phone call with a bilingual friend
 - Communicate in writing, with the assistance of Google translate or another text app
 - Work with a community based organization to find interpretation support.

6. Emergency preparedness and first aid

It is important to have a plan to address emergencies, which may include wildfires, earthquakes, fires, chemical spills, workplace violence, or becoming very sick from working in the heat. Have an emergency action plan that you review with the worker. Let them know:

- How to communicate with you in case of an emergency, including back-up phone numbers should these be needed
 - Where the exits (including windows) are located. Make sure these are not obstructed. If the worker is providing care for an adult or child, review any special needs or equipment required to move the adult or child out of the home as well as an agreed upon meeting place.
 - Where to find the “go-bags” for the worker and for anyone they are caring for in the home (see ‘c’ below).
 - Where emergency numbers are posted. Let them know to dial 911 to reach the fire department, police or emergency medical services. For example, it is an emergency if workers experience severe heat illness (see page 25).
 - Where the meeting point will be after an emergency, if other than the house.
- a. Ask the worker to share their own emergency contacts and instructions for communication, should anything happen to them.

- b. Prepare a “go-bag” for the worker and for anyone they are caring for in the home. These are bags that can be grabbed quickly and carry essential items, such as: important documents, medications and prescriptions, extra glasses, some cash or credit cards, special keepsakes, etc. Include a letter with your address confirming that the worker works at your home (as workers have experienced harassment while trying to evacuate).
- c. Plan and practice how to evacuate from the home or neighborhood.
- d. Make sure smoke detectors and carbon monoxide alarms are properly placed and spaced in the home and do regular checks to make sure they are working. Check batteries at least once a month.
- e. Provide portable fire extinguishers that are readily accessible and train the worker on its use.

NOTE: Cigarette smoking is the most frequent cause of fires in the home. If someone in the home smokes:

- Make sure lit cigarettes are never near flammable items such as oxygen tanks, paper, drapes, etc. Put water on cigarettes before throwing them in the trash. Make sure that ashtrays are located away from mattresses and bedding and avoid smoking in bed.
- f. Train workers to manage a fire while cooking:
 - Never put water on it
 - Use a fire extinguisher or
 - Put a lid on the pan and turn off the heat. They should not take the lid off until the pan is completely cooled.
 - g. Provide first aid supplies and train the worker on their use. Check and replenish these periodically. First aid supplies can include:
 - Gauze pads (at least 4 x 4 inches)
 - Large gauze pads (at least 8 x 10 inches)
 - Box adhesive bandages (Band-Aids)
 - Gauze roller bandage (2 inches wide)
 - Triangular bandages
 - Wound cleaning agent such as sealed moistened towelettes
 - Scissors
 - At least one blanket
 - Tweezers
 - Adhesive tape
 - Latex gloves (or non-latex disposable if allergic)

- Resuscitation equipment such as resuscitation bag, airway, or pocket mask
- Elastic wraps
- Splint
- Directions for requesting emergency assistance

7. Access to bathrooms and washing facilities

- a. Have a clean bathroom available for the worker, with toilets in good working condition as well as toilet paper supply.
- b. Make sure the worker has access to clean drinking water.
- c. Ensure there is running water that warms up to wash hands, soap, and paper towels or a stack of small towels to dry hands.

8. Orderly work areas

Ensure that areas where workers are asked to work are not cluttered (if it is not their explicit task to declutter) and there is adequate space to perform duties, and no unstable settings/items/furniture that create risk of falling.

B. Common hazards and guidelines to protect workers

Day laborers and domestic workers, including house cleaners, child care providers, and homecare workers, can face a number of safety hazards on the job that can cause serious injuries. Employers can reduce these risks by putting safety measures in place, providing training and education in a language that workers understand and encouraging workers to report problems or hazards. This section includes the most common hazards domestic workers and day laborers can face and describes measures to keep workers safe. Employers and workers should work together to come up with solutions that are appropriate and effective.

1. Chemicals

Many products used in the home and its surroundings contain chemical ingredients that are harmful. This includes a wide range of cleaning products, such as bleach and other disinfectants, oven cleaners, toilet bowl cleaners, rug cleaners, mold and mildew removers, furniture polish, heavy duty cleaners, etc., as well as paints, solvents, pesticides, and insecticides, among others. Chemicals can cause both short-term health effects as well as long-term effects. For example, causing or worsening asthma or other respiratory problems, chronic dermatitis, cancer, birth defects, reproductive harm, and other serious problems. Some tasks that can expose workers to chemical hazards require specialized training and equipment. For example, workers should not be expected to clean mold or soot and ash from wildfire smoke.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Find safer alternatives.
 - a. Look for Safer Choice, Green Seal®, Ecologo® and Design for the Environment (DfE) labels on products. These labels are on environmentally preferable cleaning products and disinfectants that have a lesser or reduced effect on human health and the environment.
 - b. Use less dangerous chemicals for cleaning (for example, baking soda or vinegar) or less dangerous pesticides in the yard (check with a local nursery or integrated pest management resources for suggested alternatives that are less toxic).
 - c. Use only what is needed. For example, limit use of disinfectants for only what is necessary (cleaning up blood or bodily fluids, for example). Otherwise, use an all-purpose cleaner.
2. Keep a list of the products that will be used by the worker and what they are for.
3. Make sure all products have labels. Read the labels and review the warnings and first aid information with the workers.
 - a. The CA Cleaning Products Right to Know Act (SB258) requires all manufacturers of cleaning products sold in California to include labels with key chemical ingredients as well as their phone number and website. They are required to have additional information on their websites for each product. Check the labels and website for products that will be used in the home.
 - b. Plan ahead for what to do if there is a spill or a worker needs first aid. Post the number for the Poison Control Center (1-800-222-1222) in a visible place.
4. Provide fans or have exhaust fans for better air circulation.
5. Make sure any personal protective equipment is appropriate for the chemicals being used and that it is the right size for the worker. For example, read the label or other information to see what type of glove (latex, nitrile, neoprene, etc.) is effective to protect from that particular product.
6. Encourage workers to let you know if they feel any health effects that might be related to chemical exposure, such as skin rashes, burning eyes, irritated throat, dizziness, difficulty breathing, etc.
7. Put out of reach any chemical products that the worker will not use and, if these are particularly dangerous, make sure they have a label in a language the worker understands. For example, poisons for rodent control or other toxic or corrosive substances.

8. **Train the workers on the risks of specific chemicals and on safer practices.** For example:
- a. Increase ventilation and fresh air: Open windows or use a fan for better air circulation.
 - b. Safe dilution: review which products have to be diluted and the label instructions for dilution; they do not need to be any stronger than what the label indicates.
 - c. Safe application: Avoid spraying products into the air or on areas to be cleaned. Instead, spray the product on a sponge or rag. Keep containers closed when not in use.
 - d. Proper storage and response to spills: Don't place products in other unlabeled containers – it is important to label so everyone knows what is in a container. Review where to store products and what to do in case of spills, as indicated on the label (for example, store away from heat).
 - e. Avoid mixing different chemicals or products:
 - NEVER MIX products that have bleach and ammonia as the fumes can be deadly. Ammonia can be found in glass and window cleaners, urine (cat litter boxes, diaper pails) and some paints.
 - Do not use two drain cleaners together or one right after another.
 - Do not mix the following:
 - Vinegar and hydrogen peroxide
 - Chlorine and alcohol-based gels (chlorine can be found in bleach, toilet bowl cleaners, chlorinated disinfectant cleaners, automatic dishwashing detergents, among others)
 - Chlorine and vinegar
 - Baking soda and vinegar
 - Bleach and rubbing alcohol
 - f. Proper hygiene: Wash hands with soap and water after using chemicals.

Personal protective equipment

Read the product label to see what type of PPE is needed. PPE can include:

- Gloves (non-latex if the worker is allergic)
- Eye protection (safety glasses or goggles)
- Aprons or other protection to avoid contact with skin
- Respirators
 - Workers who are doing demolition, painting or prep work to paint may need N95 masks to protect from lead dust, or may need a half-mask respirator with

HEPA filters (note that potential exposure to lead dust requires other protective measures as well, see “Other resources” below). Some medical conditions (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) may prevent some workers from being able to wear these respirators.

Note: Dust masks or cloth masks do not protect workers from chemicals in the air. N95 respirators protect against dust and particles, but not against vapors or fumes from spraying chemicals.

Other resources

- Cal/OSHA: Working Safer and Easier poster series for janitors and housekeepers, in English and Spanish:
 - [Working Safer and Easier \(ca.gov\)](#) Poster 7 – Chemicals
 - [Working Safer and Easier \(ca.gov\)](#) Poster 8 – PPE
- [Cal/OSHA: Lead in Construction fact sheet](#)
- OSHA: [Protecting workers who use cleaning products](#)

2. Lifting, bending, repetitive motion, and other musculoskeletal hazards

(See next section for “Lifting and moving adults or children while caregiving”)

Work-related musculoskeletal injuries (MSIs) are injuries of the muscles, tendons, ligaments, nerves, joints, cartilage, bones, or blood vessels in the arms, shoulders, neck and back. Symptoms of MSIs include pain, stiffness, swelling, numbness, and tingling. These injuries can be caused by a single event (such as a slip, trip, or fall) or happen over time.

Domestic workers and day laborers often carry out physically demanding work and many tasks involve risks for MSIs. Examples include lifting garbage or laundry, cleaning bathrooms or places that are low or high up, moving furniture or other heavy items, moving or lifting adults or children, doing gardening, digging, etc.

The first step is to **identify the risk factors that commonly contribute to work-related MSIs**. Together with the worker, review and answer these questions:

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 1) Are there risks for slips, trips and falls? | [yes] [no] |
| 2) Does the worker work in one position for a long period of time? | [yes] [no] |
| 3) Does the worker have to reach far, especially reaching above their shoulders repeatedly? | [yes] [no] |
| 4) Does the worker lift heavy items or make forceful movements to get the job done? | [yes] [no] |
| 5) Does the worker have to bend, twist, kneel or squat? | [yes] [no] |

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| 6) Does the worker push or pull items? | [yes] [no] |
| 7) Does the worker work around objects that could fall and strike them? | [yes] [no] |
| 8) Does the worker lean or press against hard edges or hard surfaces? | [yes] [no] |
| 9) Does the worker have to work very fast? | [yes] [no] |
| 10) Does the worker have too little time to recover between physically demanding or repetitive tasks? | [yes] [no] |

Any “yes” answers indicate the worker could develop an MSI because of their job. The more times “yes” answers there are, the greater the chance of an MSI. Take steps to eliminate these risk factors.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

Ergonomics is the science of ‘fitting the task to the worker’ so that workers are more comfortable and do not get hurt. The goal is to ensure that tasks are designed with ‘ergonomics’ in mind - that is, ensuring that workers have the tools and equipment they need to minimize wear and tear on the body.

1. Provide tools and equipment to reduce the need for reaching, bending or using too much force. For example:
 - A long-handled duster, mop, and scrub brush to limit bending and reaching
 - A step stool to help clean high places without overreaching or a safe ladder (see “Working from Heights and Ladder Safety”)
 - Gardening tools that have cushioned handles
 - Shovels and other landscaping equipment of different sizes and that are appropriate for the different types of tasks
 - Equipment to move heavier items, such as wheelbarrows for landscaping, dollies or carts, and casters on the feet of heavy furniture so they are easier to move
2. Vary tasks so that workers are not doing continuous repetitive work and can use different muscle groups.
3. Ensure workers can rest after physically demanding tasks and that they have enough time to do the tasks being asked of them without having to work too quickly.
4. Check the work areas to assess if there are changes that can be made to reduce stress on the body. It is best if work is done at mid-body height with elbows on either side of the body. For example:

- raising a bed if it is adjustable
 - using a table to carry out a task so a worker doesn't have to bend down
 - moving items out of the way so access to the task at hand is easier and requires less awkward postures.
5. Lighten loads – instead of carrying one heavy load, separate it into smaller, lighter packages. For example, buy smaller garbage and lawn bags or laundry baskets.
 6. Check the lighting and temperature of the home. Make sure workers have adequate light to see clearly without straining and that the temperature is comfortable (not too hot or too cold).
 7. Provide kneepads or a folded towel to cushion the knees if a worker has to kneel.
 8. **Train the workers on the risks and safer practices.** For example:
 - a. If it is too hard or heavy to lift or move, get help.
 - b. Avoid reaching and bending. Move as close as possible to the task. For example, when making a bed, walk around it to avoid reaching.
 - c. Every few minutes, stretch and change positions. Switch hands if possible. Try not to twist your body – move your feet instead.
 - d. Use tables or other equipment to try to keep work at waist level.
 - e. Safe lifting techniques, including:
 - Bending the knees not the back
 - When lifting a heavy object, hold it close to your body.
 - Lift with your legs. This puts less stress on the back.
 - f. Push instead of pull – such as when moving furniture. Pushing generally takes less effort than pulling because your body weight is used to assist the exertion. Always use two hands.
 - g. Avoid twisting: move your body instead of twisting. For example, when vacuuming, mopping or other tasks, keep your body in a straight position.
 - h. If possible, switch sides to vary muscle groups used, for example by using the other arm or hand.

Personal protective equipment

- Knee pads
- Slip-resistant gloves to help with gripping slippery items.
- A note on back belts or braces:
 - These are *not* recommended. There is lack of evidence that they protect people when lifting, and instead they could lead to other problems.

Other resources

- **Cal/OSHA**: Working Safer and Easier poster series for janitors and housekeepers, in English and Spanish:

- [Working Safer and Easier \(ca.gov\)](#) Poster 1 – posture and equipment
- [Working Safer and Easier \(ca.gov\)](#) Poster 2 – mopping, bending and lifting
- [Working Safer and Easier \(ca.gov\)](#) Poster 3 – posture
- [Working Safer and Easier \(ca.gov\)](#) Poster 4 – posture and lifting
- [Working Safer and Easier \(ca.gov\)](#) Poster 5 - posture and lifting
- [Working Safer and Easier \(ca.gov\)](#) Poster 6 – trips and slips
- [Working Safer and Easier \(ca.gov\)](#) Poster 8 – PPE
- OSHA Quickcard: [Reducing the Risk of Lifting Injuries in the Landscape and Horticulture Industries Spanish](#)

3. Lifting and moving adults or children while caregiving

Homecare and childcare workers may have to lift and move those under their care. Lifting and moving people, for example from the bed or chair, or to help a person take a bath or shower, can create a high risk for back injury and other musculoskeletal injuries. Assess the job tasks to identify any potential risks from lifting and transferring a person. Also, evaluate to what extent the person can help in the transfer, by assessing their mobility. Workers may need specific training on how to use lifting devices and the safe transfer of people in their care. Direct communication between the person being lifted and the worker is vital for ensuring everyone's safety.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Lifting assistance devices are often useful for lifting and transfers. It is important to do an assessment to determine the correct equipment. Sometimes they may not be appropriate, depending on the person's body or disability. There are a variety of devices to consider for different tasks, with each providing different levels of support and movement. Examples include:
 - a. Slide boards, slip sheets, rollers, slings or gait belts
 - b. Mechanical lift equipment, such as Hoyer lifts
2. Obtain equipment that can help make the lifting easier. For example, provide:
 - a. Adjustable beds, raised toilet seats, shower chairs, and grab bars. This equipment can keep the person at an acceptable lift height and allow them to participate in the transfer.
 - b. For showers and baths: Handrails or a shower chair to allow the person to bathe more easily, a long-handled bath brush to limit reaching, a non-slip mat or tub strips to prevent falls or slips; rolling toilet or shower chairs to reduce transfers
 - c. For childcare:
 - A step stool for small children to reduce lifting
 - Changing tables for diapering that are waist height to minimize bending and reaching

- Kid potties or toilet extensions for the child to use the bathroom without the worker having to bend over them
3. Provide training on the proper use of assistive devices and how to assess when they are needed.
 4. Where possible, engage a second person to assist with lifting, especially when using equipment such as mechanical hoists.
 5. Talk with the worker to plan for the lift. For example, let them know if there is a preferred way to be lifted or transferred and why. Ask the worker if they have concerns or are unable to bear weight on their legs.
 6. Allow the worker to have rest breaks and varied tasks to prevent overexertion.
 7. **Train the workers on safer lifting and transferring techniques.** For example:
 - a. Safe lifting practices:
 - Keep the person you are carrying as close to your body as possible.
 - Keep your feet apart. Ensure one foot is in the direction of the move to avoid rotating the spine.
 - Avoid twisting and keep shoulders and pelvis aligned.
 - Bend your knees slightly without changing your body's center of gravity, and maintain the natural curves of your spine.
 - Have the person put his/her/their arms around your body, not your neck.
 - Avoid twisting the spine by ensuring one foot is in the direction of the move. Using gentle rocking motions can also reduce exertion.
 - b. Move along the side or foot of the person's bed to stay in safe postures while performing tasks at the bedside. Pulling someone up in bed is easier when the head of the bed is flat or down.
 - c. Use a chair or stool to sit and limit bending or reaching too much when helping the person with a shower or bath.

Personal protective equipment

- A note on back belts or braces: These are *not* recommended. There is a lack of evidence that they protect people when lifting, and instead they could lead to other problems.

Other resources

- **Cal/OSHA: [A Back Injury Prevention Guide For Health Care Providers](#)**

4. Infectious disease hazards

People can be exposed to a variety of infectious diseases from contact with blood or bodily fluids, skin-to-skin contact, or from airborne viruses. These diseases include gastrointestinal and respiratory infections, Hepatitis A, staph infections, and diseases transmitted by viruses carried in blood, such as AIDS and Hepatitis B & C (incurable liver diseases). Bodily fluids that can carry disease include blood, urine, feces, saliva, nasal discharge, eye discharge, and secretions from cuts or skin sores, semen, and vaginal fluid. Depending on the virus or bacteria and the way they are transmitted, workers are at risk when they are exposed to:

Blood

- Stuck by a needle or “sharp” (an object that can pierce the skin) that has infected blood on it. It could be a needle that is being used for an injection or a diabetes stick, a discarded needle that accidentally sticks the worker when they are cleaning up trash, a razor, or a piece of broken glass.
- Are splashed in the eyes with infected blood
- Touch infected blood when they have a cut, open sore, or broken skin - for example in soiled laundry.

Other bodily fluids

- Touch bodily fluids if they have a cut, open sore, or broken skin
- Change diapers or clean up after someone has gone to the bathroom
- Wipe noses

Airborne viruses

- Work in the same area as someone who has an infection
- Work in areas with a lot of people or in crowded places
- Touch surfaces where viruses may be present and then bring the hands to the eyes, nose or mouth (such as for common cold)

❖ **Contact with blood or other body fluids**

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

Practice “Universal Precautions,” which means acting as if all blood and body fluids could be infected. It is not possible to tell if someone is infected simply by looking at them, and people may not know that they have an infection or disease. The best practice is to use Universal Precautions whenever there is a chance of contact with blood or body fluids, including during tasks such as bathing, wound care, laundry, diapering, and toileting.

1. Eliminate the use of needle devices whenever safe and effective alternatives are available. If needles are used, provide needle devices with safety features.
2. Provide sharps containers for workers to dispose of needles safely. Provide other supplies needed to follow Universal Precautions (see #3).

3. Provide wipes and diaper disposal options like a diaper pail to dispose of waste in a safe way.
4. Isolate contaminated laundry from other items and bag it separately. Provide leak-proof bags or containers for carrying soiled laundry to protect skin from contact with blood or body fluids. Wash contaminated laundry and laundry bags in hot water (minimum 70°C) with detergent for at least 25 minutes.
5. Talk with the worker about the benefits of vaccination for Hepatitis B and encourage them to talk with their doctor about it. If possible, let them know where they can obtain the vaccine and offer to give them paid time when they go for the vaccine appointment.
6. **Train the workers on the practices of Universal Precautions:**
 - a. Wear disposable gloves every time they may be in contact with blood or body fluids. Use special gloves if either the worker or the consumer is allergic to latex or vinyl.
 - Make sure the gloves fit.
 - Replace them if they get torn or damaged. Use new gloves for each new task
 - NEVER touch the mouth or eyes while wearing gloves.
 - Throw away used gloves. Turn gloves inside out when removing them. Put them in a plastic bag and tie the bag for disposal. NEVER reuse disposable gloves.
 - b. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and running water at regular times during work.
 - Remove any blood or body waste from the worker's or the person's skin by washing with soap and running water.
 - Wash hands before putting on gloves and after taking them off.
 - c. Handle sharps with extreme care.
 - Point sharps away from the body and discard them immediately after use into a sharps container.
 - Never recap a needle or touch the point.
 - Never put sharps in a regular recycling bin or trash can. Never reach into a trash bag. It could contain needles or other sharps.
 - If a worker could come in contact with sharps (for example, while taking out the trash) provide them with needlestick or puncture-resistant gloves.
 - d. Cover cuts, sores, or breaks in the skin and the person's skin with bandages, unless the doctor says otherwise.
 - e. Use bleach or other disinfectants (there may be safer alternatives) to carefully clean household surfaces that may have blood or body fluids on them.

- If bleach is used, use it with care. Can mix one part bleach to 10 parts water). Make this solution fresh each day– and label it.

Personal protective equipment

- Disposable gloves
- If handling sharps, needlestick or puncture resistant gloves
- Eye protection

Other resources

- **Cal/OSHA:** [Don't Risk Your Health - Cal/OSHA Bloodborne Pathogen Standard for housekeepers, janitors, park groundskeepers](#)
- ¡No Ponga en Peligro su Salud! [Don't Risk Your Health \(ca.gov\)](#) (Spanish)
- [Cal/OSHA - pamantayang pathogen ng sakit na nakukuha sa dugo](#) (Tagalog)

❖ Airborne diseases – including COVID-19

Airborne diseases spread through very small droplets or aerosol particles in the air that are released when an infected person coughs, sneezes, exhales, talks, etc. Examples include COVID-19, influenza, measles, tuberculosis, chicken pox, and avian flu, among many others. Limiting transmission from person to person at work is important to reduce community spread of dangerous viruses, as was experienced with COVID-19.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. If anyone in the house is infected or has symptoms, let the worker know and reschedule the work if possible or limit the tasks to work that can be done outside and away from the person who is infected. Encourage workers to report any symptoms they may have, without fear of repercussions.
2. Improving indoor ventilation and air circulation by using filtered air systems, air purifiers, fans, or open windows and doors.
3. Limit visitors or others in the home while the worker is working. If others are in the home, ask them to wear a mask while the worker is there.
4. Provide time and supplies for frequent handwashing. Wash hands for at least 20 seconds and regularly during work.
5. Provide a predesignated space where the worker can be alone to take a break from mask-wearing.
6. Talk to the worker about the benefits of vaccinations for infectious diseases, including COVID-19.
7. If the worker becomes infected after being exposed at work, provide paid time for the hours which were scheduled and they can no longer work.

8. Check guidance issued by the local health departments or the California Department of Public Health that describe requirements for mask use and for quarantine and isolation. For COVID-19, check the [California COVID-19 site](#).
9. If an illness is transmitted through contaminated surfaces, train the worker on the use of disinfectants and safer work practices (see Chemical Hazards). Choose disinfectants that are safer alternatives by looking for the Safer Choice, Green Seal®, Ecologo® and Design for the Environment (DfE) labels on products. Note that for some viruses, like COVID-19, cleaning with soap and water is often enough.

Personal protective equipment

- Masks or respirators. For COVID-19, the most effective are N95 respirators or K95 or KF94 masks, and the safest practice is for everyone to wear a mask indoors.
- Note that some medical conditions (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) may prevent some workers from being able to wear these respirators.

Other resources

- **Cal/OSHA:** [Posters, Educational Materials, Model Programs and Other Resources Related to COVID-19](#)
- OSHA: [Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\) | Occupational Safety and Health Administration \(osha.gov\)](#)

5. Slips, trips, and falls

Hazards that lead to slips, trips, and falls can cause bruises, sprains, and broken bones. (See “Working from heights and ladder safety”)

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Do a walk through to identify any potential hazards. Move or remove items that may cause falls such as:
 - Electrical cords or extension cords, phone cords
 - Curled or wrinkled rugs, mats, or carpets
 - Oxygen tubing
 - Objects that block the workers path
 - Slippery floors (with water, oil or grease)
 - Clutter, bedding, toys
2. Use carpet fasteners or double-sided carpet tape to help keep rugs in place. Use non-slip pads under throw rugs and do not place throw rugs at the top or bottom of stairs.

3. Clear walkways and stairs of obstacles and tripping hazards like boxes, papers, and other items. Put tape over electrical cords on the floor to prevent tripping.
4. Use non-skid wax on floors or no wax at all.
5. Keep a mop and towels on hand to clean up spills quickly. (Remember that dry spills, such as flour, sugar, and coffee grounds can also lead to falls.)
6. Never leave drawers open on dressers, file cabinets, etc.
7. Make sure there is adequate lighting throughout the home, including walkways, stairs, and outdoor areas. Make sure all light bulbs are working. Keep flashlights on hand in case of power outages.
8. Ensure the worker has adequate time to complete the tasks, as rushing or working too quickly can lead to falls.
9. **Train the workers on the risks and safe practices**. For example:
 - a. Use step stools or ladders if they need to reach high places, and not stand on chairs or tables. (See “Working from heights and ladder safety.”)
 - b. Avoid stepping into bathtubs to clean, as there is a risk of slipping on a wet tub or falling while climbing in and out.
 - c. Clean up spills right away. Even minor spills can cause slips and falls.
 - d. Use railings on stairs for support.
 - e. Avoid blocking vision when carrying loads.
 - f. Arrange the tools and supplies they will use in a way that does not create a tripping hazard.
 - g. How to open and close any baby gates in the house, and to take the time to do so instead of stepping over them.

Personal protective equipment

- Shoes with non-slip soles. If you have a “no shoes” policy in the home, provide the worker with adequate, comfortable, indoor-only shoes.

Other resources

- **Cal/OSHA**: [Working Safer and Easier Poster 6](#) (slips and falls)

6. Stress

Stress can be a physical, mental, or emotional strain or tension. Stress occurs when the mind and body are overloaded with pressure and worry. This overload is not good for health, especially if it continues over a long period of time as it can then lead to other medical conditions. Some causes of job stress are:

- long hours
- workload
- work pace – pressure to do tasks quickly or too many tasks at once
- job insecurity or fear of losing a job
- poor communication with the employer or lack of supportive, respectful communication
- harassment or bullying
- unsafe or hazardous conditions
- insufficient hours or breaks
- unpredictability of scheduling
- being closely monitored
- emotional labor involved in caretaking and concern about the consumer or child a worker is caring for
- lack of control over how work is done or not having the tools or resources to solve problems
- coping with grief and loss when clients are sick or dying
- possible loss of housing if worker is a live-in worker

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Ensure reasonable and predictable hours, shifts, and schedules.
2. Use a written agreement to review job duties and hours. This should be a “living document” that is used to check-in regularly to assess if the work plan is working well for both the worker and you.
3. Address any potential job hazards and take action to ensure the home is a safe workplace. Engage the worker in this process.
4. Provide a living wage and make sure workers are able to take their scheduled breaks and time for lunch to rest.
5. Promote justice and fairness at work. Communicate clearly and respectfully. Ensure other members of the household do as well. Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs.
6. Show appreciation for the work being done and recognition for the professionalism and experience the workers bring to the job.
7. Recognize that if a person being cared for is ill or dying, the worker may experience sadness, grief, and fear of job loss. Plan ahead and provide support, for example by connecting with them resources for grief counseling.

Other resources

None

7. Workplace violence

Workplace violence refers to the threat or use of physical force against a worker that could result in injury, psychological trauma, or stress and, in some cases, even death.

Examples of violence incidents include:

- Physical attack, including biting, choking, grabbing, hair pulling, kicking, punching, slapping, pushing, pulling, scratching, or spitting
- Attack with a weapon or object, including a gun, knife, or use of a common object
- Threat of physical force or threat of the use of a weapon or other object
- Sexual assault or threat, including rape/attempted rape, physical display, or unwanted verbal/physical sexual contact
- Animal attack

Workers may be at risk when they:

- Provide care to clients with dementia, other forms of cognitive impairment, or conditions that may cause them to be non-response to instructions or behave unpredictably or aggressively
- Provide care to clients who might be confused or disoriented
- Provide care to someone with a history of violence or disruptive or threatening behavior
- Provide care to children
- Encounter other people in the home or neighborhood who may pose a threat
- Encounter animals in or near the home

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Assess whether there is potential risk of violence for the worker from anyone in the home or neighborhood. Come up with a plan if someone has a history of disruptive or threatening behavior.
2. Have a zero-tolerance policy for any violence—including verbal abuse—and communicate this to the worker. Invite and welcome feedback so the worker feels comfortable talking with you about any concerns. By acting early, it is sometimes possible to prevent potentially dangerous or harassing behavior from escalating.
3. Alert workers about others who may be in the home while they are working. Listen to and trust the worker if they express discomfort with others at the house.
4. Talk to others in the house about the importance of maintaining a professional relationship with the worker. This includes communicating in a respectful tone, not touching the worker to avoid situations that could be unwelcome or interpreted as sexual or threatening, and not talking or joking about relationships or sex.

5. Avoid having firearms or dangerous weapons in the house, or keep them securely locked. Alert workers if there are such weapons on the premises.
6. Keep dogs and any other animals that may pose a danger in an area that is separate from the worker.
7. Talk to the workers about a response plan, including calling 911 or other resources for help if a situation should arise in which they need to call for help.
8. Identify any possible risks in the neighborhood or when the worker is going to and from work. For example, any areas that are not well lit, are empty or isolated, or have a known risk. Talk to the worker about these and ways to avoid or address them. If the worker leaves the house after dark to walk to the bus or other transportation, consider accompanying them if there is a safety risk.
9. Provide resources or access to training in working with people with mental health issues or cognitive impairments and what to do if they become agitated, aggressive, uncooperative and/or violent.

Personal protective equipment

Not applicable

Other resources

- **Cal/OSHA** : [Model Injury & Illness Prevention Program for Workplace Security](#) (also in → [html format](#))
- Sexual Harassment - handouts from a DLSE curriculum for janitorial workers
[English](#) [Spanish](#)

8. Heat

Workers can experience heat illness from doing physically active jobs in hot, humid temperatures or from working indoors in hot environments. Heat illness can be fatal, so it is important to take steps to prevent it and to get prompt attention if symptoms develop.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Provide clean, cool, potable drinking water – at least one quart per worker per hour. (A caution on use of hoses: they must be governmentally approved for potable drinking water systems, as shown on the manufacturer's label.)
2. Provide access to shade areas so workers can rest and recuperate (especially at 80°F or above).
3. If a worker is just starting to work in hot weather – or if there has been an increase in temperature of 10 degrees or more – have them work at a slower pace and set fewer tasks, so they can adapt to working in the heat.

4. Shift hours of work to avoid working in the hottest times of the day.
5. Don't leave workers alone on a hot day – make sure to check in on them regularly.
6. Provide access to bathrooms (see Access to bathrooms and washing facilities, page 10).
7. If workers are working at 95°F or above, observe them more closely for alertness and signs and symptoms of heat illness. Give them additional rest breaks and more frequent reminders to drink plenty of water.
8. For inside the home, ensure there is good ventilation and have the air conditioning on. Use cooling fans if necessary.
9. Train workers on the risks and safe practices. For example:
 - a. How to recognize the early signs of heat stress, such as sweating, headache, fast heartbeat, dizziness, or nausea or vomiting. They should stop and take a rest break in the shade, drink water and cool down. If they are not feeling better, they should let you know as they may need medical assistance.
 - b. What to do if they have symptoms and how to contact you if they need help. Immediately summon emergency responders (call 911) if someone shows signs of severe heat illness such as a decreased level of consciousness, staggering, vomiting, disorientation, irrational behavior, convulsions. A person showing signs of heat illness must not be left alone, and they must not be sent home without being offered first aid or emergency medical services. (See “Planning for an emergency,” page 8.)
 - c. To drink water before they are thirsty. Better to drink small amounts of water often – such as a cup of water every 15 minutes throughout the workday. Avoid other beverages such as coffee, sodas, and alcoholic beverages, which are dehydrating.
 - d. To avoid dark clothes. Wearing hats and light-colored clothing helps workers stay cooler in the sun.

Personal protective equipment

Not applicable

Other resources

Cal/OSHA:

- Worker Fact Sheet (English): [worker fact sheet english.pdf \(99calor.org\)](#)
- Worker Fact Sheet (Español): [worker fact sheet spanish.pdf \(99calor.org\)](#)
- 99calor website (English): [Prevent Heat Illness \(99calor.org\)](#)
- 99calor website (Español): [Prevent Heat Illness \(99calor.org\)](#)

9. Wildfire smoke

The possibility of wildfires requires emergency planning (see “Planning for an emergency”, page 8) as well as precautions if air quality is affected. As was mentioned earlier, workers should not be expected to clean up after wildfires, including cleaning mold or soot and ash from wildfire smoke, as this may require specialized equipment and training.

Wildfire smoke contains harmful chemicals and very tiny particles that can irritate the lungs and cause serious or even fatal health effects, including reduced lung function, bronchitis, worsening of asthma, and heart failure.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Monitor the Air Quality Index (AQI) for the tiny particles called PM2.5. Monitoring should be done throughout the workday.

The AQI is an index developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to assess air pollution and classify air quality into six categories depending on the level of health concern. It can be found on different sites and even the weather app on smart phones. Look at:

- Airnow.gov

When the AQI is at 151 or above, it is considered unhealthy (note that AQI of 100 or above is unhealthy for sensitive groups, which can include people with asthma or other lung conditions, children and the elderly).

2. If the AQI is at 151 or above (or above 100 if the worker or person they care for is in a sensitive group), take steps to reduce exposure. This can include:
 - a. Avoid outdoor activities.
 - b. Change work schedules and slow down to reduce the intensity of the work.
 - c. Provide more rest periods, and try to do so in spaces that have filtered air like a car or indoor environment.
3. Use portable HEPA air filters to reduce the amount of particles inside the home.
4. **Train the workers on the risks and safe practices**. For example:
 - a. The importance of using an N95 respirator when they are outside (especially when AQI is over 151), and how to put it on and take it off properly. Note that some medical conditions (such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease) may prevent some workers from being able to wear these respirators.

- b. To notify you if they have any symptoms, including: watery or burning eyes, runny nose, coughing, rapid heartbeat or difficulty breathing. This can indicate the need to stop work.
5. Workers cannot be required to work in an area that is within an evacuation zone. Do not leave the worker behind in the event of a wildfire. If workers are at your home and you hear of possible evacuation orders, communicate with the workers immediately and ensure they have transportation and know the safe routes to leave the area.

Personal protective equipment

- N95 respirators – Workers should wear these when they are outside, especially if the AQI is 151 and above.
- A note on other masks: Cloth masks and common dust masks do not protect against the small particles found in wildfire smoke)

Other resources

- Cal/OSHA: Worker Protection from Wildfire Smoke webpage: [Wildfire Smoke Emergency Standard \(ca.gov\)](#)
- Worker Safety and Health in Wildfire Regions webpage: [Worker Health and Safety in Wildfire Regions \(ca.gov\)](#)
- Cal/OSHA Mandatory Appendix B to 5141.1 (mandatory information on protection from wildfire smoke): [California Code of Regulations, Title 8, Appendix B to Section 5141.1. Protection from Wildfire Smoke Information to Be Provided to Employees \(Mandatory\)](#)

10. Working from heights and ladder safety

Falls from as low as five (5) feet can cause serious injuries or death. In construction-related jobs, falls are the leading cause of death. In California, fall protection is required for most work 7.5 feet off the ground or higher. This can include guardrails, safety nets, or personal fall arrest systems to protect workers from falling.

Assess whether the job you are hiring for requires a licensed contractor who has the equipment and training to adequately install fall protection devices like safety nets and harnesses. Note that workers doing work on roofs must be provided with protection from falling if they are 20 feet off the ground (measured from lowest point on roof to ground level). This can include scaffolds, guardrails, safety nets, or fall arrest systems

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. If a worker is on an elevated surface, inspect the area for any slip or fall hazards. Review any potential hazards with the worker during a walk-through.

- Check for slippery or uneven areas.
 - Ensure that any holes in the floor are covered or guarded.
2. Provide step stools or ladders if workers need to reach high places, as they should not stand on chairs or tables. Choose the right ladder for the job. This is based on the task and the environment.
 - To reach or clean objects that might not warrant a stepladder, a low step and sturdy step stool (less than 24 inches) should be provided.
 - Use double-sided stepladders (lean to ladders) to reach high objects or to clean windows and walls.
 3. If workers are doing any work on trees, closely inspect the root collar, tree trunk, and limbs for strength and stability before climbing. Check for cavities in the tree, rotten or dead branches, splits and cracks in the trunk or where branches are attached, broken branches hanging in the tree, etc. If a ladder is used, tie it off on a secure branch. (Note that tree trimming is very hazardous work and usually requires specialized equipment and training.)
 4. **Train the workers on safe practices**. For example:
 - a. Inspect the ladder before use to make sure it is in good condition (for example, the joint between the steps and side rails shall be tight, all hardware and fittings securely attached, and the movable parts shall operate freely without binding or undue play).
 - b. Make sure the ladder is free of oil, grease or other slipping hazards.
 - c. Make sure the ladder is only used on a firm, level and stable surface.
 - d. Do not load ladders beyond their maximum intended load nor beyond their manufacturer's rated capacity.
 - e. Use ladders equipped with non-slip feet.
 - f. Have someone hold and guard the bottom of the ladder.
 - g. Never stand on the top of the ladder or the second to last rung, and instead to always stay in the middle. Workers should not lean or stretch away from the ladder and should instead move the ladder as needed.
 - h. Wear non-slip shoes.

Personal protective equipment

- Non-slip shoes
- Fall arrest systems, when needed, which include the harness as well as a lanyard and anchor point that supports at least 5,000 lbs.

Other resources

- Cal/OSHA [fall protection: Youth in Construction eTool \(ca.gov\)](#) [Note: this is designed for young workers, but it is probably suitable for household use as well.]

- Cal/OSHA ladder safety: [Portable Ladder Safety - Introduction \(ca.gov\)](#)
- [NIOSH app on safe use of ladders](#)

11. Power hand tools and equipment

Power tools can make jobs easier, but can also cause serious injuries like electrical burns and shock, cuts and lacerations. For example, weed wackers and drills can cause serious cuts if used incorrectly. Workers could also be exposed to the hazards of falling, flying, abrasive, and splashing objects. There is a risk of hearing loss from the noise, and tools that vibrate, like a jackhammer, create a risk for musculoskeletal injuries.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Pick the right tool for the job. Do not force the tool to do a job that it is not intended to do. Do not use a small power tool for large jobs.
2. Ensure workers are provided with clear instructions on using the tool safely. Read the instructions for the particular tool that will be used, as specifications may vary.
3. Inspect the power tool to make sure it is not damaged. If there are any cracks, parts misaligned, dangling pieces or screws, rusty, dull or blunt blades and other damages do not ask the worker to use that tool until it has been repaired.
4. Be very careful with the use of chainsaws. These are very powerful tools that can be extremely dangerous. Workers need training on their use, and should wear protective equipment (see below).
5. Make sure all power tools are grounded with 3-prong plugs or double-insulated.
6. Ensure that electric tools are not used in damp or wet locations unless they are approved for that purpose. Store electric tools in a dry place when not in use.
7. Keep work areas well-lighted when operating electric tools.
8. Keep cords away from water, heat, oil, and sharp edges.
9. **Train workers on safe practices.** For example:
 - a. Disconnect tools when not in use, before servicing, and when changing accessories such as blades, etc.
 - b. Stop using any power tool that is wet, overheating, smoking, starting to smell, or if the worker feels a tingle or shock.
 - c. Never carry a tool by the cord. Never yank the cord to disconnect it from the receptacle.
 - d. Avoid accidental starting. Do not hold fingers on the switch button while carrying a plugged-in tool.

- e. Keep handles dry, clean and free from oil and grease so that the power tool does not slide from the hand.

Personal protective equipment

- Gloves
- Eye protection
- Appropriate safety footwear
- Safety helmet

Other resources

- Cal/OSHA: [Easy Ergonomics: A Guide to Selecting Non-Powered Hand Tools \(ca.gov\)](https://www.dir.ca.gov/OSHA/Ergonomics/A_Guide_to_Selecting_Non-Powered_Hand_Tools.html)
- OSHA: [Hand and Power Tools \(osha.gov\)](https://www.osha-slc.gov/hand-and-power-tools/)

12. Electrical hazards

There are four main types of injuries: electrocution (fatal), electric shock, burns, and falls. These injuries are most commonly caused by contact with power lines, lack of ground-fault protection, incorrect use of equipment, and improper use of extension and flexible cords.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Avoid putting too much of a load on extension cords (check the rating tag on the cord).
2. Have missing outlet covers and frayed cords replaced. A light switch or electric outlet hot to the touch can indicate unsafe wiring – get help!
3. Check that appliances like lamps, hair dryers, coffee makers, mixers, microwaves, and toaster ovens are in good condition with intact cords and plugs. If you get even a small shock from an appliance, stop using it immediately until it is fixed. Never use a hair dryer, radio, TV, or other electric appliance near water.
4. Avoid connecting several appliances to the same outlet, so that the outlet does not overheat.
5. Do not place electrical cords under rugs or carpets.
6. Suggest that workers remove jewelry as metal is an excellent conductor. It is not a good idea to wear rings or other metal jewelry around electricity.
7. Do not plan work in a wet environment (like outdoors if it's raining, wet lawns, damp garages, etc.).
8. Always be aware of overhead wires. Take extra care when working near overhead power lines; make sure not to use metal ladders around overhead power lines.

9. There may be power wires underground. If you plan to excavate, first call 811 or 800-642-2444 to make sure there are no power lines or other utilities that can get damaged. Never touch a downed wire. Keep at least 10 meters away from fallen wires and call the gas and electric company to notify them of any downed lines

Other resources

- Cal/OSHA: [Cal/OSHA Guide to Electrical Safety](#)
- OSHA: [Working Safely with Electricity \(osha.gov\)](#)
- [Using Portable Generators Safely \(osha.gov\)](#)

13. Other hazards

Look out for other potential hazards. These Voluntary Guidelines have provided detailed information on the most common hazards. Depending on the type of work that is carried out, there could be other hazards to consider. Once a hazard is identified, follow similar steps to think about how the worker may be exposed, how to eliminate or reduce the risk, and whether any personal protective equipment is needed.

Other possible hazards include:

- **Noise** – If workers need to raise their voice to be heard more than three feet away, they could be exposed to noise levels that can cause permanent hearing loss.
- **Poison oak and other plants** – workers who do gardening or landscaping may be exposed to poison oak or other plants that cause allergic reactions.
- **Knives and other sharp objects** used in cooking and other tasks – can cause cuts and lacerations, especially if having to work at a fast pace or multitask.
- **Animals and insects, including pets, poisonous snakes, and ticks** – Rattlesnake bites are a common hazard for anyone working outdoors in Southern California during mating season, and ticks can carry a variety of diseases including Lyme Disease. In addition, cat feces may pose a risk of toxoplasmosis and pregnant women should avoid changing cat litter.
- **Work pace and rushing to complete tasks** – can increase risk of falls and musculoskeletal injuries, as well as contribute to stress and mental health impacts.

Other resources

- OSHA quick card - [Preventing Injuries to the Eyes and Ears in Landscaping](#)

C. Resources for more assistance

[Cal/OSHA Training Academy](#) (in English and Spanish)

The Cal/OSHA Training Academy is presented by the California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA) to provide online training courses, guidance documents, videos, and other helpful resources on a variety of occupational safety and health topics. All employers and workers in the state of California have free access to the training courses and other information on this site. Employers may incorporate these courses and materials into their safety programs.

The **Domestic Worker and Employer Outreach and Education Program (DWEOP)** is an existing state funded education and outreach program in the household services sector, implemented as a collaboration between community-based organizations and the Division of Labor Standards Enforcement (DLSE or the Labor Commissioner's Office). These organizations may have resources available for training and support in addressing language access.

California Domestic Workers Coalition

A coalition of grassroots domestic worker organizations and their supporters from the labor, faith, domestic employer, women and student communities, who work to protect the labor rights of the domestic workers who care for our homes and our loved ones. A statewide network that works together to ensure that statewide laws and agencies protect domestic workers from abuse and to inspire all Californians to uphold the dignity of domestic work in our homes.

Contact information:

California Domestic Workers Coalition

Email: info@cadomesticworkers.org

Phone: 415-625-3124

Affiliate organizations and their contact information is listed in the following table.

Organization	Phone	Address or Location
CHIRLA Los Angeles	(213) 660-6758	2533 W 3rd St. #101 Los Angeles, CA 90057
CHIRLA Pacoima	(818) 923-9163	11243 Glenoaks Blvd. #9 Pacoima, CA 91331
Chinese Progressive Association	(415) 391-6986	1042 Grant Ave. 5th Floor San Francisco, CA 94133
Filipino Advocates for Justice Oakland	(510) 465-9876	310 8th St. #309 Oakland, CA 94607

Organization	Phone	Address or Location
Filipino Advocates for Justice Union City	(510) 487-8552	3961 Horner St. Union City, CA 94587
Filipino Migrant Center	(562) 302-1968	2125 Santa Fe Ave. Long Beach, CA 90810
Graton Day Labor Center	(707) 829-1864	2981 Bowen St. Graton, CA 95444
Hand in Hand: The Domestic Employers Network	(323) 393-3591	info@domesticemployers.org
Instituto de Educación Popular del Sur de California (IDEPSCA)	(213) 222-3050	1565 W. 14th St. Los Angeles, CA, 90015
La Colectiva de Mujeres of Dolores Street Community Services	(415) 252-5375	3358 Cesar Chavez St. San Francisco, CA, 94110
Mujeres Unidas y Activas San Francisco	(510) 975-2127	3543 18th St. #23 San Francisco, CA 94110
Mujeres Unidas y Activas Oakland	(510) 637-9897	2640 International Blvd. Oakland, CA 94601
Nuestras Manos Centro Cultural de México	(714) 643-0962	837 N Ross St. Santa Ana, CA 92701
Pilipino Association of Workers and Immigrants (PAWIS)	(602) 330-1134 (669) 699-8786	Santa Clara County
Pomona Economic Opportunity Center (PEOC)	(909) 397-4215	1682 W Mission Blvd. Pomona, CA 91766
Pilipino Workers Center Los Angeles	(213) 250-4353	153 Glendale Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026
Pilipino Workers Center San Diego	(719) 641-7837	7710 Balboa Ave. Suite #325 San Diego, CA 92111