

Southern California Janitorial Chemicals Safety Project



We accomplished a lot during 2001!

Our outreach effort brought chemical safety messages directly or indirectly to 6,550 Southern California janitors and custodians. These workers previously used maintenance products that contained an estimated 357,000 lbs of hazardous ingredients – that's an average of 54 lbs of hazardous chemicals per janitor.

We delivered our message in four key ways:

Site Visits – 22 meetings with building managers, health & safety staff, and janitors responsible for about 75 locations. In these meetings we reviewed MSDSs, product literature, work practices, and inventory management.

Workshops – 7 sessions conducted for 113 attendees (in Riverside, Santa Barbara, Santa Monica, UCLA, and Whittier). The sessions ranged from 2 hours to all day, and featured hands-on trials of environmentally preferable products. A (PDF) copy of the 2-hour workshop handout can be downloaded.

Chemical Safety Reviews – several hundred products were reviewed in behalf of companies and agencies employing about 1,240 janitors.

Direct mailings – to 1,150 janitorial contractors and other businesses in Santa Barbara. Forty-two (4%) of these recipients contacted the project to request help or product samples. Copies of the fact sheet, (PDF) our first newsletter article (PDF), and our second newsletter article (PDF) that we mailed can be downloaded.

Our site visits and reviews discovered a potential of 58,000 lbs per year of hazardous ingredients that could be avoided either by shifting to milder products, or by rescheduling work so that the hazardous products are used when needed rather than according to an arbitrary timetable.

Initial feedback and follow-up interviews suggest that about a third of our recommended chemical changes are being made in the short term – that's a net reduction in hazardous ingredients so far of about 19,000 lbs per year. The largest shifts appear to be happening in four product types:

- glass cleaners;
- acidic toilet bowl cleaners;
- general purpose cleaners & degreasers; and
- metal cleaners.

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