

Voluntary Guidelines Draft - For Discussion with SB321 Advisory Committee September 2022

Mandate from SB321:

The advisory committee shall develop voluntary industry-specific occupational health and safety guidance for the purpose of the following:

- (1) Educating household domestic service employees on how, to the extent possible, they may identify and evaluate workplace hazards and prevent or minimize work-related injuries and illnesses.
- (2) Educating household domestic service employers on how they may create safer workplaces by identifying and evaluating workplace hazards and how to prevent or minimize work-related injuries and illnesses for their employees.

Criteria for guidelines:

- 1) Focused on prevention of job-related injuries and illnesses
- 2) Centered in occupational safety and health; matters under Cal/OSHA jurisdiction
- 3) Specific to the hazard or specific language that will provide effective guidance
- 4) Relevant to the home setting

DRAFT

A. Purpose - *To be developed*

1. Introduction to “steps to a safer workplace” - what and why
 - Employers’ responsibility - ensure workers’ **safety** and **health**, and to provide them with enough **training** and protection to do their job safely.
2. Common injuries for domestic workers and day laborers (bulleted list of top ones)
3. How this is organized

B. Planning for prevention – before work begins:

1. Agree on tasks and hours

- a. Talk with the worker about the expectations, job duties, and the number of hours they would need. Once you review your priorities, the worker can help develop an estimate of the hours and what is feasible based on tasks involved, the size and number of rooms, and the detail and intensity of the work. Workers will be able to provide feedback on how much can realistically be accomplished within a certain amount of time.
 - Use a written agreement or contract, signed by both the employer and 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 links from Hand-in-Hand for sample contract language](#).

- Review information on specific rights workers have, to acknowledge that both the worker and employer understand these:
 - Right to minimum wage, breaks, overtime, and sick time. For more information, go to [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 [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 [DWC site](#).
- Talk with the worker about any special considerations, such as any areas of the house to avoid or not clean, and provide instructions for caring for valuables or other special belongings, if they are to tidy up or clean around them.
- b. Specify when regularly scheduled breaks and a break for lunch will happen. Legally, workers 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.
- c. 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.
- d. Let the worker know about any special circumstances in the home while they are working, for example, if other people will be in the household while they are there.
- e. Recognize that some tasks are outside the scope of what workers regularly do and should not be expected without a further assessment, as they 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, the elderly, or people with disabilities or a workers' comfort level related to 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, or do work on roofs or other types of construction work that require special equipment and training.

Some jobs require licensed contractors who have specialized training and equipment. If the cost of construction or renovation is \$500 or more, you may need a contractor's license, unless you are an owner-builder. In California, all businesses or individuals who construct, or alter, or offer to construct or alter any building, highway, road,

parking facility, excavation, or other structure must be licensed by the Contractors State License Board (CSLB) if the total cost (labor and materials) of one or more contracts on the projects is \$500 or more. Owner-builders who build or improve structures on their own property are not required to be licensed if they either do the work themselves or use their own employees (paid in wages). However, owner-builders hiring workers are subject to employment laws that include securing workers compensation insurance.

2. 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 traditional workplace, employers are responsible for developing an *Injury and Illness Prevention Plan* which describes how they will implement these steps.

- a. **Identify hazards or “what can hurt workers.”** This can involve doing a walk-through and thinking ahead of time about the tasks that will be carried out and looking for things that could hurt a worker.
 - Involve the workers in this step as they have first-hand knowledge of the tasks and can provide good feedback.
 - Identify 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 chemicals.
- b. **Think about and put solutions in place to “control” hazards.** Assess what changes, equipment, and supplies are needed to make the home a safe space. There are various solutions or methods that can be used to protect employees. Talk about these with the workers and ask for their input on solutions.

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. This makes your workplace safer and ensures all workers are protected.
- If that’s not possible, think about how to do the work more safely or about improved equipment and tools, or other changes that reduce the risk.
- Last, determine whether any personal protective equipment (PPE), (items worn on the body such as gloves, masks, knee pads, etc) is needed . 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 if 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 slips and falls and injury from objects. Do not ask workers to remove their shoes to work in the home.

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

- c. Evaluate hazards and the solutions you have 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 at the source and investigate why it happened. Make changes to prevent further injuries.

3. **Ensure workers are trained and provide information**

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. Training to review the range of hazards and ways to work safely should be offered during paid time. For sample training resources, go to [XXX](#).

- a. Once you 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). This training should be included in the worker's paid time.
- b. Depending on the job task, also consider other topics that would be important for the worker to be trained on, such as CPR or first aid or others related to caregiving.
- c. Assess what workers are able to do or not do. Create an environment for effective two-way communication, so the worker feels comfortable letting you know what they are able to do.

4. **Encourage workers to report hazards, unsafe conditions, and any injuries or illnesses and 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 working conditions.

- b. Agree on how you will communicate, whether in person check-ins, or by phone or text. Plan regular check-ins that prompt this type of communication.
- c. If the employer and worker speak different languages, they can seek help....
(need to address):

5. Emergency preparedness and first aid

- a. 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 below.)
 - Where emergency numbers are posted. Let them know to dial 911 to reach the fire department, police or emergency medical services.
- 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.
- c. Plan and practice how to evacuate from the home or neighborhood.
- d. Make sure fire detectors are properly placed and spaced in the home and do regular checks to make sure they are working. Check batteries at least once a year.
- e. Provide portable fire extinguishers that are readily accessible and train the worker on its use.
- f. Train workers to never pour water on a cooking fire and to 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. At a minimum, first aid supplies should include:
 - Gauze pads (at least 4 x 4 inches)
 - Two large gauze pads (at least 8 x 10 inches)
 - Box adhesive bandages (Band-Aids)
 - One package gauze roller bandage at least 2 inches wide
 - Two 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
- Two elastic wraps
- Splint
- Directions for requesting emergency assistance

(from OSHA 1910.266 App A - First-aid Kits (Mandatory)).

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.

6. 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 to dry hands.

7. Orderly work areas

- a. Ensure that areas where workers are asked to work are not cluttered and there is adequate space to perform duties, and no unstable settings/items/furniture that create risk of falling.

C. 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 providing safety measures, including 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.

1. Chemicals

Many products used in the home 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, and other serious problems.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Find safer alternatives.
 - 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.
 - Use only what is needed. For example, limit use of disinfectants for only what is necessary. Otherwise, use an all-purpose cleaner.
2. Keep a list of the products that will be used by the worker in your home 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.
 - 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 you will use in the home.
 - Plan ahead for what you would 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. Open windows, use a fan, 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. Train the workers on the risks of specific chemicals and on safer practices. For example:
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Not to place products in other unlabeled containers – it is important to label so everyone knows what is in a container.

- Storage and spills: Review where to store products and what to do in case of spills.
 - Not to mix different chemicals or products.
 - NEVER MIX products that have bleach and ammonia (found in glass and window cleaner) as the fumes can be deadly.
 - Not to use two drain cleaners together or one right after another.
 - Not to 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
 - To wash hands with soap and water after they use chemicals.
7. 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.
8. 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.

Personal protective equipment

Read the labels. 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, or respirators.

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

Other resources

Cal/OSHA

OSHA: [Protecting workers who use cleaning products](#)

2. Lifting, bending, repetitive motion, and other ergonomics

Domestic workers and day laborers often carry out physically demanding work and many tasks involve risks for ergonomic injury, for example: lifting garbage or laundry, cleaning bathrooms or places that are low or high up, moving furniture or other heavy items, moving or lifting a consumer, doing gardening, digging, etc.

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.

Assess the risk factors for the tasks workers are carrying out.

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 or in an awkward 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 while cleaning? [yes] [no]
- 9) Does the worker have to work very fast? [yes] [no]
- 10) Does the worker have enough time to recover between 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 don’t get hurt.

1. Provide tools and equipment to make the tasks more comfortable for the worker so they can avoid reaching, bending or using too much force. For example:
 - A long-handled duster, mop, and scrub brush to limit bending
 - A step stool to help clean high places without overreaching and possibly balance or a safe ladder (see “Working from Heights and Ladder Safety”)
 - Gardening tools that have cushioned handles
 - Shovels and other landscape 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 have adequate rest breaks between 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 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 knee pads 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:
 - If it's too hard or heavy to lift or move, get help.
 - Avoid reaching and bending. Move as close as possible to the task. For example, when making a bed, walk around it so you don't have to reach.
 - Every few minutes, stretch and change positions. Switch hands if you can. Try not to twist your body – move your feet instead.
 - Use tables or other equipment to try to keep work at waist level.
 - Safe lifting techniques, including:

- Bending the knees not the back
- When lifting a heavy object, hold it close to the body.
- Lift with your legs. This puts less stress on the back.
- 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.
- Avoid twisting: move your body instead of twisting. For example, when vacuuming, mopping or other tasks, keep your body in a straight position.
- If possible, switch sides. Vary muscle groups 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

CalOSHA
OSHA

3, Lifting and moving 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 consumer take a bath or shower, can create a high risk for back injury and other musculoskeletal injuries. First, assess the job tasks to identify any potential risks from lifting and transferring a client. Also evaluate to what extent the consumer or client can help, by assessing their mobility.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. In almost all cases where a person needs to be lifted, some form of lifting assistance device will be needed. Provide the correct equipment for the task, which can include:
 - Mechanical lift equipment, such as hoist lifts
 - Slide boards, slip sheets, rollers, slings or gait belts
2. Obtain equipment that can help make the lifting easier and allows the patient to help himself or herself during transfer when possible. For example, provide:
 - Adjustable beds, raised toilet seats, shower chairs, and grab bars. This type of equipment can keep the client at an acceptable lift height and allows them to participate in the transfer.
 - For showers and baths: Handrails installed for the consumer to use, a shower chair to help the consumer bathe with less assistance, a hand-held shower or shower hose to make bathing easier, a long-handled bath brush to limit reaching, a non-slip mat or tub strips to prevent falls or slips

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. Train the workers on the risks and on safer lifting and transferring techniques. For example:
 - Safe lifting:
 - Keep the person you are carrying as close to your body as possible.
 - Keep your feet apart. Make sure 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 client put his/her arms around your body, not your neck.
 - Move along the side of the patient's bed to stay in safe postures while performing tasks at the bedside.
 - Use a chair or stool to sit and limit bending or reaching too much when helping the person with a shower or bath. Avoid twisting the spine by making sure one foot is in the direction of the move. Using gentle rocking motions can also reduce exertion. Pulling a client up in bed is easier when the head of the bed is flat or down.

Personal protective equipment

- 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:

CalOSHA
OSHA

4. Bloodborne pathogens

Workers can be exposed to infectious diseases carried in blood, including HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, and Hepatitis B & C, incurable liver diseases. Workers are at risk if they:

- Are stuck by a needle or "sharp" (an object that can pierce your 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 or bodily fluids when they have a cut, open sore, or broken skin - for example in soiled laundry.

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, so it is best 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, and toileting.

1. Review the practices of Universal Precautions with the worker and provide the necessary supplies. Workers should:
 - 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 re-use disposable gloves.
 - b. Wash hands often. Wash with soap and running water at regular times during work.
 - Remove any blood or body waste from the worker’s or the consumer’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 put sharps in a regular recycling bin or trash can. Never reach into a trash bag! It could contain needles or other sharps.
 - Never recap a needle or touch the point.
 - d. Cover cuts, sores, or breaks in the skin and the consumer’s skin with bandages, unless the doctor says otherwise.
 - e. Use bleach to carefully clean household surfaces that may have blood or body fluids on them. Mix one part bleach to 10 parts water. Make this solution fresh each day– and label it.
2. Eliminate the use of needle devices whenever safe and effective alternatives are available. If needles are used, provide needle devices with safety features.
3. Provide sharps containers for workers to dispose of needles safely.

4. Provide heavy-duty plastic bags for carrying soiled laundry to protect skin from contact with blood or body fluids. Talk to workers about handling laundry soiled with blood or body fluids carefully, not to overstuff or compress the bags, and to never reach into garbage or disposal containers with bare hands.
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.

Personal protective equipment

Disposable gloves, eye protection

Other resources

CalOSHA
OSHA

5. 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. Follow 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. Check the [California COVID-19 site](#). The safest practice for COVID-19 is for everyone to wear masks indoors.
3. Limit visitors or others in the home while the worker is working.
4. Provide time and supplies for frequent handwashing.
5. Follow safe work practices that pertain to the specific illness. For COVID-19, this includes:
 - Improving indoor ventilation and air circulation by using filtered air systems, fans, or open windows and doors.
 - Providing masks and wearing these indoors

6. Talk to the workers about the benefits of vaccination from COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.
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. If the 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 K-95 or KF94 masks.

Other resources

CalOSHA
OSHA

6. 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)
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.
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. Workers should 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.”)
7. Never leave drawers open on dressers, file cabinets, etc.
8. 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.
9. Train the workers on the risks and safe practices, including:
 - Clean up spills right away. Even minor spills can be very dangerous.
 - Use railings on stairs and to take their time.
 - Make sure they can see where they are walking and that their vision is not blocked by anything they may carry.
 - Arrange the tools and supplies they will use in a way that does not create a tripping hazard.

Personal protective equipment

Shoes with non-slip soles

Other resources

CalOSHA

OSHA

7. 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
- unsafe or hazardous conditions
- insufficient hours or breaks
- unpredictability of scheduling
- concern about the consumer or child a worker is caring for
- lack of control or not having the tools or resources to solve problems
- being closely monitored

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 employer.
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. Give workers opportunities to participate in decisions and actions affecting their jobs.
6. Show appreciation and recognition for the work being done.

Other resources

CalOSHA
OSHA

8. 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 or other forms of mental decline
- Provide care to clients who might be confused or disoriented
- Provide care to children
- Encounter other people in the home or neighborhood who may pose a threat

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Assess whether there is potential risk of violence for the worker from the client or others... (need more language here, e.g client as employer)
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's 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, 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.

Personal protective equipment

Not applicable

Other resources

CalOSHA

OSHA

9. 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 drinking water – at least one quart per worker per hour.
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. Train workers on the risks and safe practices, including:
 - Recognize the early signs of heat stress, such as sweating, headache, fast heart beat, 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.
 - 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 work day. Avoid other beverages such as coffee, sodas, and alcoholic beverages, which dehydrate you.
 - What to do if they have symptoms and how to contact you if they need help.
 - Avoid dark clothes. Wearing hats and light-colored clothing helps workers stay cooler in the sun.
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.

Personal protective equipment

Not applicable

Other resources

[CalOSHA, fact sheet](#)

OSHA

10. Wildfire smoke

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 work day.

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:
 - Avoiding outdoor activities
 - Changing work schedules and slowing down to reduce the intensity of the work
 - Providing more rest periods, and trying to do so in spaces that have filtered air like a car or indoor environment
3. Train the workers on the risks and safe practices, including:
 - The importance of using an N95 respirator when they are outside, and how to put them on and take them off properly
 - To let you know 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.
4. Use portable HEPA air filters to reduce the amount of particles inside the home.
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

(Note: cloth masks and common dust masks do not protect against the small particles found in wildfire smoke)

Other resources:

CalOSHA

OSHA

11. Working from heights and ladder safety

Falls are a leading cause of injury and death in many construction-related jobs. Falls from as low as 5 feet can cause serious injuries or death. For most work 7.5 feet off the ground or higher, fall protection is required. 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. Do not assign a worker tasks that require a licensed contractor.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. If a worker is on an elevated surface, inspect the area for any slip or fall hazards. Check for slippery or uneven areas. Check for any holes in the floor where a worker could fall through or trip over and ensure these are guarded or covered to prevent falls. Review any potential hazards with the worker during a walk-through.
2. Workers doing work on roofs must be provided with protection from falling including scaffolds, guardrails, safety nets, or fall arrest systems if they are 20 feet off the ground (measured from lowest point on roof to ground level).
3. Workers should use step stools or ladders if they need to reach high places, and not stand on chairs or tables. To reach or clean objects that might not warrant a step ladder, a low step and sturdy step stool (less than 24 inches) should be provided.
4. Provide safe ladders and review safe practices with the workers:
 - Use double-sided stepladders (lean-to ladders) to reach high objects or to clean windows and walls. For other jobs, choose the right ladder for the job. This is based on the task and the environment.
 - 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). Also make sure the ladder is free of oil, grease or other slipping hazards.
 - Make sure the ladder is only used on a firm, level and stable surface.
 - Do not load ladders beyond their maximum intended load nor beyond their manufacturer's rated capacity.
 - Use ladders equipped with non-slip feet.
 - Have someone hold and guard the bottom of the ladder.
 - 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.
 - Wear non-slip shoes.

Personal protective equipment

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

Other resources:

[CalOSHA fall protection](#)

[Cal/OSHA ladder safety](#)

[NIOSH app on safe use of ladders](#)

OSHA

12. Tree maintenance and removal

Tree work can include a variety of tasks such as trimming, pruning, felling, and removing trees and bushes. Workers may need to climb trees, use power tools while in a tree, or feed wood chippers. Tree work injuries can be fatal, and can include crushing injuries and fractures, electric shock, cuts and lacerations, or dismemberment or decapitation.

Assess whether the job you are hiring for requires a licensed contractor who has the equipment and training to adequately carry out the needed work. These contractors should employ qualified tree workers – workers who have training and experience on the techniques and hazards involved in tree maintenance and removal, and on the use of special equipment. Do not assign a worker tasks that require a licensed contractor or other qualifications.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

If the worker is doing minor tree maintenance and can work safely at less than 7.5 feet off the ground:

1. Make sure they do not work near any power lines. Follow the 10-foot (minimum approach distance) rule. Never perform tree work where trees or branches (including leaves) are within 10 feet of high-voltage energized power lines and conductors.
2. 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.
3. Postpone tree work under unfavorable weather conditions, such as high winds, rain or ice.
4. Instruct workers and others not involved directly in the pruning/removal work to maintain a safe distance.
5. If the tree is located in a spot where there can be vehicular traffic or pedestrians, place warning signs, barricades, and post flaggers, if needed.

6. If a ladder is used, tie it off on a secure branch.
7. Be careful with the use of chain saws. These are very powerful tools that can be extremely dangerous. Workers need training on their use, and should wear protective equipment (see below).
8. Ensure that all tools, lifts and ladders are well-maintained and in good working condition, and appropriate for the tree size.

Personal protective equipment

Safety equipment such as harnesses, belts, tree saddles, ropes, and lanyards.

Hard hats, face shields, safety glasses, shoes, gloves, high-visibility clothing, and hearing protection (earmuffs/earplugs) may be needed.

Other resources:

[Cal/OSHA](#)

[Cal/OSHA Tree Work Safety Guide](#)

13. 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. 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 ergonomic injuries.

Ways to eliminate or reduce hazard

1. Pick the right tool for the job you have to do. Do not force the tool to do a job that it is not intended to do, or use a small power tool for large jobs
2. Read the instructions really well. Even if you have experience using a power tool, do not start using it before knowing all the specifications of that particular tool.
3. Inspect the power tool to make sure it is not damaged. If you notice any cracks, parts misaligned, dangling pieces or screws, rusty, dull or blunt blades and other damages do not use that tool until it has been repaired.
4. Make sure all power tools are grounded with 3-prong plugs or double-insulated.
5. Do not use electric tools in damp or wet locations unless they are approved for that purpose. Store electric tools in a dry place when not in use.
6. Keep work areas well-lighted when operating electric tools.
7. Keep cords away from water, heat, oil, and sharp edges.
8. Train workers on safe practices, including:

- Disconnect tools when not in use, before servicing, and when changing accessories such as blades, etc.
- Stop using any power tool that is wet, overheating, smoking, starting to smell, or if you feel a tingle or shock.
- Never carry a tool by the cord. Never yank the cord to disconnect it from the receptacle.
- Avoid accidental starting. Do not hold fingers on the switch button while carrying a plugged-in tool.
- Keep handles dry, clean and free from oil and grease so that the power tool does not slide from your hand.

Personal protective equipment

Gloves, eye protection, and appropriate safety footwear when using electric tools.

Other resources:

Cal/OSHA
OSHA

14. 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's 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 doesn't overheat.
5. Do not place electrical cords under rugs or carpets.
6. Take off all jewelry as metal is an excellent conductor. It is not a good idea to wear rings or other metal jewelry around electricity.
7. Don't 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

15. Other Hazards

There are other potential hazards depending on the type of work that is carried out. For each, it is important to identify how the worker may be exposed and the steps to eliminate or reduce the risk, as well as any personal protective equipment that 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 ivy and other plants** – workers who do gardening or landscaping may be exposed to poison ivy or other plants that cause allergic reactions
- **Knives and other sharp objects** used in cooking and other tasks - can cause cuts and lacerations
- **Pets** –
- **Work pace** and rushing to complete tasks –
- Etc

D. Resources for more assistance - *To be developed*