

# Janitorial Workload Newsletter

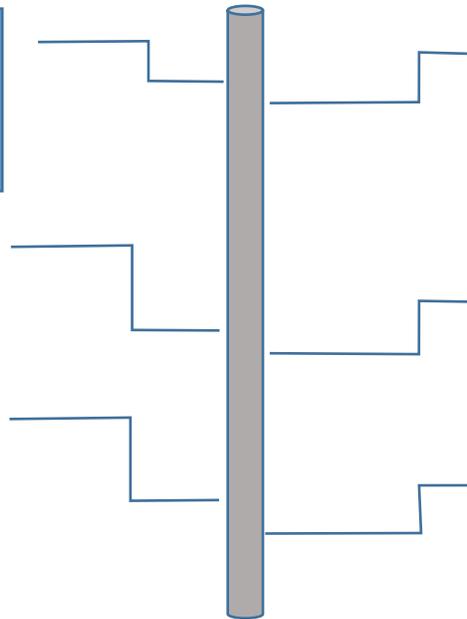


## What we learned from janitors about workplace safety:

A variety of issues undermines janitors' workplace safety. To address these multiple safety risks, we recommend implementing a safety leadership program.

Prioritizing safety leadership increases janitor health and well-being, work productivity, and is cost effective in the long term.

Our goal is to provide applicable business knowledge that companies can use to improve safety leadership skills.



Manager and supervisor safety knowledge, commitment and communication, guided by respectful relationships with employees create work conditions that are pivotal for reducing potential workplace injuries.

This series aims to start a conversation on how workplace relationships influence worker productivity, safety and wellness.

Research has shown that management and supervisor targeted training is more effective in reducing workplace injuries than focusing solely on training employees.

Lack of or poor safety communication between management and employees can create a series of conflicts that lead to injury.



*For example, Erick is mopping the floor and notices many of the mop's strings falling off. He sends his supervisor a picture of the mop and asks for a replacement. He receives no response. A week passes and Erick's back starts to hurt from mopping harder than usual due to the failing mop. Erick's heavy workload prevents him from leaving his job to talk to his supervisor. He can only hope to run into him during his shift, but has no luck.*

*After a couple of weeks, Erick files for a workers' compensation claim because his back pain is debilitating. After filing, his supervisor calls him and asks about his injury. Erick explains his overexertion from using a bad mop has caused severe back pain. His supervisor explains that the specific mops they buy are sold out and a new mop has been ordered. Erick says his doctor is advising him to rest or switch tasks that spare his back from further injury. He wishes his supervisor to had communicated about the delay sooner and changed his work tasks to spare him from injury. After the call, Erick is angry about his supervisor's lack of consideration and communication and vows to apply for a job at a competing company.*

**Interpersonal conflicts create work distractors, decrease productivity and increase potential workplace injuries.**

## Why the focus on interpersonal relationships?

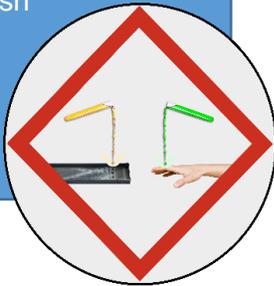
Supervisors that resolve issues in a timely manner help to stabilize the wellbeing of workers and their ability to accomplish tasks in an efficient and safe way.

Janitors in our focus groups and individual interviews shared their work experiences. Interpersonal conflict and difficulty communicating between supervisors and employees was commonly reported as creating a high stress work environment for everyone. Effective listening from supervisors tends to yield greater safety, because it includes valuable employee insights.

Supervisors that are equipped to lead a team and respond to safety concerns, also tend to establish productive, efficient, and mutually beneficial work relationships. Management's effort to build a safety-oriented work environment is in the company's best interest for long-term success.

## Occupational health and safety leadership prevents many types of workplace hazards, such as:

- Chemicals
  - Skin rash



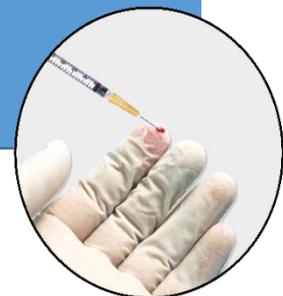
- Physical hazards
  - Slips, trips, and falls



- Ergonomic issues
  - Heavy lifting in awkward positions



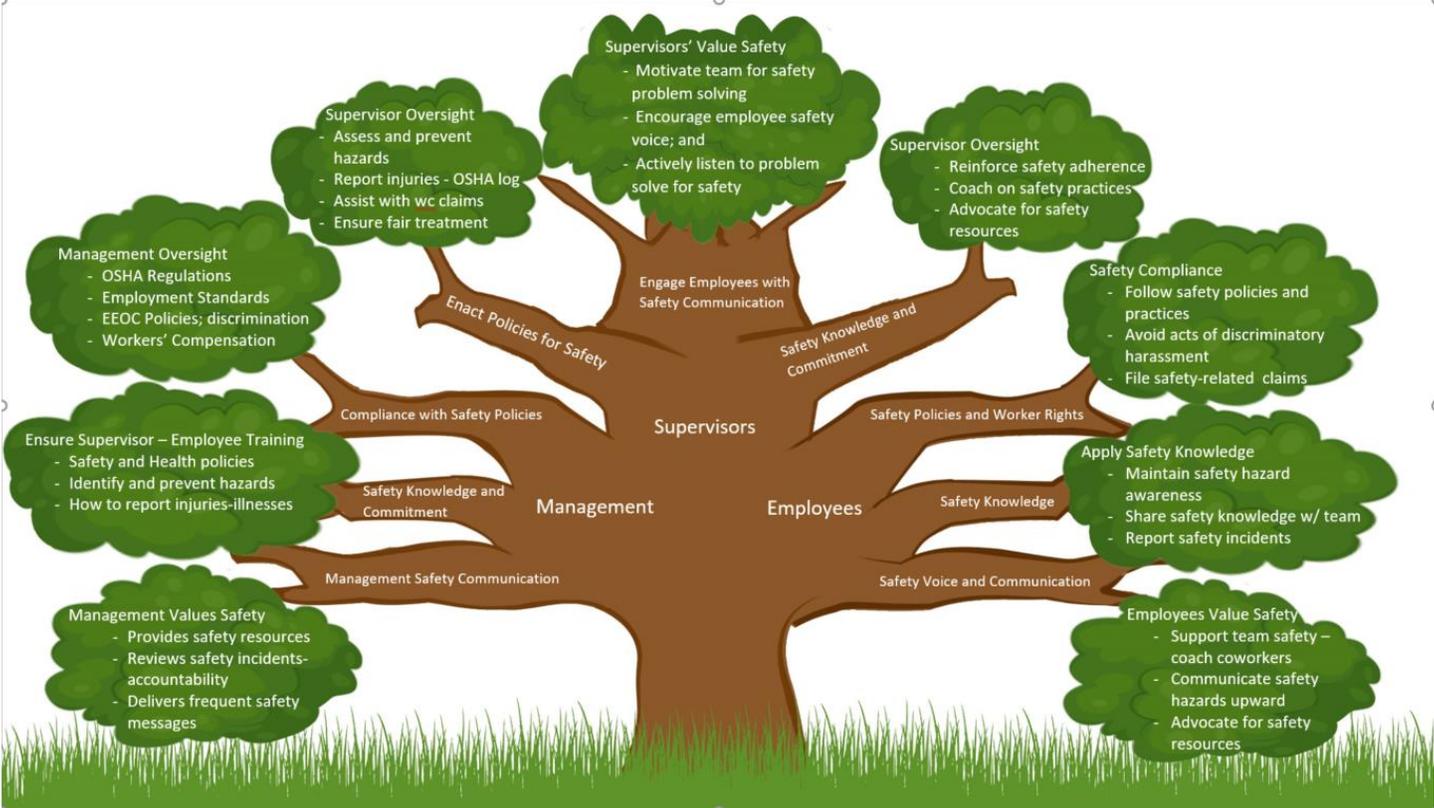
- Biological agents
  - Needle stick incident



- Psychological fallout – from work stress
  - Anxiety
  - Depression
  - Burnout



Everyone has an important role in up keeping safety as a priority at work, the chart below displays different topics related to the actors responsibility.



Washington State Department of Labor & Industries

To learn more about the study, call/text/email SHARP  
 360-819-7908 ▪ 1-888-667-4277 ▪ JanitorStudy@Lni.wa.gov

SHARP Publication Number: 102-76-2021

