

Health Matters

Workers Want To Ban Unsafe Towels

(NAPSA)—American workers don't have to let contaminated, laundered shop towels harm their health once they understand the issue.

Results of a survey of U.S. manufacturing workers show nearly four in five want to ban laundered shop towels from the workplace if they're not 100 percent free of hazardous materials such as lead and cadmium after washing.

Harris Interactive recently conducted an online survey for Kimberly-Clark Professional. The survey targeted production floor employees and represents millions of U.S. workers who use shop towels every day in industries like automotive, aviation, printing, food and beverage processing, and metals and equipment manufacturing.

The Problem

Shop towels are used in manufacturing to wipe machines, parts and equipment, and then washed by industrial launderers for reuse at multiple facilities. Metals retained on laundered shop towels can become a health risk to workers. Long-term exposure to heavy metals has been associated with cancer, reproductive issues, kidney disease, lung and skin disease, and nervous system damage.

A recent study of laundered shop towels conducted by Gradient, an environmental and risk science consulting firm, found 100 percent of the towels tested contained toxic heavy metals.

The Harris survey found nearly half of workers aren't aware of the danger of laundered shop towels. More than one of every three admitted to bringing the towels home and 18 percent use them for personal hygiene and first aid.

"This survey demonstrates an urgent need to educate manufacturing workers about the danger and safety issues of laundered



This worker is wiping equipment with a clean shop towel.

shop towels," said Kim MacDougall, research scientist at Kimberly-Clark Professional.

What Workers Can Do

The survey found that if workers knew the risks, many would:

- Ask for a safer alternative. Nearly four in five said shop towels should be banned if they are not free of hazardous materials after laundering.

- Take greater safety precautions. Sixty-nine percent of workers do not clean their hands after every shop towel use.

- Raise the issue with a safety manager, employer or union. Seventy-one percent of workers say it's the duty of employers to keep them informed.

What Companies Can Do

Companies can replace laundered shop towels with clean and safe disposable ones, such as Wypall from Kimberly-Clark Professional.

Learn More

For further facts on this issue, go to www.TheDirtOnShopTowels.com, call (888) 346-4652 or follow @KCProf_NA on Twitter.