

NORTHERN MANHATTAN CARE COLLABORATIVE NEWSLETTER

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Your Workplace can Negatively Impact your Health!!

Have you ever wondered how many hours in a day you spend doing certain activities? For example, how many hours are spent working? How many hours are spent doing household chores or leisure activities? The American Time Use Survey was done by the Bureau of Labor Statistics to find out how people spent their day in 2010. The survey found that on average, employees worked 7.9 hours per day during the week, and 5.5 hours over the weekend. Also, men worked slightly longer hours than women; men worked 8.2 hours and women worked 7.8 hours per day on average. The survey also asked the number of hours people spent doing household chores, such as cleaning, laundry, cooking, repair work, and filing bills. On average, men spent 2.1 hours doing household chores and women spent 2.6 hours per day. The survey also found that men spent about 5.8 hours and women spent about 5.1 hours per day, on average, doing some form of leisure activity or sports, which includes activities such as exercise, watching TV, reading, hanging out with friends, and using the computer or Internet.

Why should we care about how our day is spent? Knowing *how* a day is spent allows us to understand *where* our day is spent. The environment of where people spend their time has a big impact on our health, so it is important to know where people spend most of their day. Outdoor environmental issues have always been under the spotlight, but it is just as important to maintain clean and healthy indoor environments. Looking at the statistics, a big part of our day is spent at work and another big portion is spent at home; both of which are indoors. In fact, on average, people spend 90 percent of their day indoor. This number may be slightly different depending on the type of job; for example, farmers and construction workers spend more time outdoors than indoors. However, even with this slight difference, it is very important for people to make an effort to maintain a clean and healthy indoor environment.

There are many types of dangers, or hazards, in an indoor environment. There are different types of hazards at home and at a workplace. The types of hazards at a workplace will also depend on the type of job. Some of the major ones include:

- Asbestos in buildings that can damage lungs
- Carbon monoxide from burning gas
- Very loud noises that can cause hearing damage at construction sites
- Mold and laboratory animals that can damage your airway and cause allergies and infections
- Slips and falls
- Hazardous substances, or chemicals that can affect indoor air quality

It is easier to keep your indoor environment healthy at home than at work. This is because at home you can make the decisions for yourself, your family and roommates on what goes on in the household. By making your own decisions, you have greater control of your environment at home. But at work, you as a worker do not make many of the decisions about maintenance of the work environment. Many of these decisions are made by the manager, boss, or owner of the company or the building. This makes it harder to take control of your work environment.

Learn about the hazards that can be found at your work to become aware of the types of dangers that you might be working with: <http://www.healthyworkinglives.com/advice/workplace-hazards/index.aspx>

The What, Where, and How of Hazardous Substances

One of the major hazards, or dangers, of concern at the workplace is hazardous substances. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), describes hazardous and toxic substances as chemicals that are found in the workplace that can have damaging effects (OSHA LINK, CITE). These substances have several negative effects; they can harm our health by reducing the quality of the indoor environment. Many animals and other life forms in the wild, including fish, birds, and plants can be harmed when chemicals are spread throughout the environment. This can happen when they are improperly disposed of, or accidentally leaked in to water supplies.



Hazardous substances can be found in many types of common products, such as cleaning products, hairdressing products, fumes from welding, paints, and oils.

Hazardous and toxic chemicals are found in several forms: solid, liquid, gas, vapor, dust, fume, fiber and mist. All types can harm the body in one way or another and the harmful effects depend on the several factors:

- Route of exposure – the way chemicals enter your body
- Dose – the amount that enters your body
- Toxicity – the amount that is needed to harm your body
- Duration of exposure – how long you are exposed to the chemicals
- Mixing with other substances – mixing chemicals can sometimes worsen the harmful effects
- Sensitivity – how readily your body responds to the chemicals that enter your body

There are several ways that chemicals can enter your body

- Breathing – this can harm your lungs, irritate your nose and throat, and cause coughing and chest pains.
- Physical contact – this can damage and or burn your skin. It can even enter the bloodstream and harm other parts of your body. Eye contact can also damage your vision.
- Accidentally swallowing chemicals can cause many types health problems.

Hazardous substances can have immediate or long-term effects on our health. For example, acid spills on your skin can cause immediate burns, whereas everyday contact with some chemicals may lead to cancer later on in your life. Learn more about what types of hazardous substances can be found at your work here: <http://www.healthyworkinglives.com/advice/workplace-hazards/index.aspx>

The Law is Not Protecting Us!

There are many laws to help reduce exposure to workplace hazards. One example is the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA). This law was passed in 1976 to help control the use of hazardous chemicals in common products. This law allows the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to test old and new chemicals for their toxicity. Information collected from the tests are then used to limit or ban the use of the harmful chemicals. The EPA can also set rules for maintaining records of the chemicals.

Even with this law, people are not protected from hazardous chemicals. The Safer Chemicals Healthy Families coalition is working to have the TSCA updated to better protect people from toxic chemicals. They bring up the following problems with the current TSCA:

- Over 60,000 known chemicals were accepted to be safe when the TSCA became law. But only 200 of them were actually tested.
- Now, there are over 80,000 chemicals in used everyday products. These chemicals have not been tested to make sure that they are safe for us and the environment.
- TSCA does not require that all ingredients in some chemicals to be labeled on their products.
- In the U.S., chemicals must be demonstrated to be harmful in order for their use to be banned. In Europe, chemicals are not allowed to be sold unless they are tested to make sure that they are not harmful. This means that they are banned until proven safe for manufacturing.



Updating the TSCA is one of the top things on the to-do list of the Obama administration. Public health professionals are pushing for the following changes to better test for and control toxic chemicals to prevent harmful effects on human health and the environment:

- Making safety information of chemicals available to the public and labeling all ingredients that are used in products.
- Taking immediate steps to control the use already-known toxic chemicals
- Testing for safety of toxic chemicals as they are found in the work environment. Tests should be based on levels of toxic chemicals that humans are exposed to in their daily life.

These changes will allow immediate cutback in use of the most toxic chemicals, allow policy makers to make better decisions on laws about use of toxic chemicals. Also, manufacturing companies can improve the selection of chemicals used in products so that there are harmful ef-

The Good and the Bad of Cleaning Products

Using safe and green products can make a big difference in maintaining our health. Many workers suffer many types of health problems because of the hazardous and toxic chemicals that they are exposed to at work everyday. Here is an example of a cleaning business owner that suffers health problems because of her work:

“[I] started my own cleaning business in [May] of 2000. I am still going strong, working six days a week... Using strong chemicals on a daily basis has become a health problem. I feel that I have developed allergies. My lungs also burn after using certain chemicals. There are a lot of cleaning products that also may cause damage to the surfaces that you are cleaning. It would be great to find products that were safe for me and the expensive homes that I clean” (My Story).

There are many more workers that suffer similar and other health problems because of the products with which they come in contact. It is important for bosses and managers to be mindful of the health of their workers when making decisions about products that they provide for their workers to use.

What are some safe and green cleaning products? Look for the following logos:



Green Seal is a non-profit organization that promotes for a more sustainable world with programs that are supported by science. Green Seal certifies products that meets their standards by thoroughly testing the products. Their site offers a list of industrial and household cleaning products that are certified.



Design for the Environment is a program of the U.S Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that certifies products that are environmentally friendly and safe for people. Certified products are scientifically tested for all ingredients included.

It is important to look at the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) on cleaning products. The MSDS provides information on hazards, ingredients, responses to emergencies, handling and storage, how to dispose of the product.

Some hazardous substances to look for on an MSDS are:

- Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) – chemicals that remain in the environment in the form of vapors for a long period of time
 - Trichloroethylene (TCE) – found in solvents and industrial degreasing products such as spot cleaners and metal and rug cleaners. TCE can cause many symptoms like eye and throat irritation, headaches, and dizziness. It can also cause kidney and liver damage as well as cancer.
 - N-hexane – found in solvents and industrial degreasing products and can cause similar symptoms to TCE, as well as affect your nerves so that it causes numbness in your feet, hands, and arms
- Triclosan and Triclocarban – found in antibacterial products such as liquid hand soap and have been shown to affect hormones that are important for normal body development. When these are drained and enter the environment, they affect the development of marine animals.
- Sodium lauryl sulfate – this is what makes cleaning products lather. This can cause skin irritation and damage your liver
- Methylene chloride – found in many industrial products such as rust removers, degreasers, paint stripper, and wood floor cleaners. Methylene chloride causes headaches, nausea, and drowsiness, as well as cause lung and liver cancer

Find out what cleaning products are used at your workplace!



Announcements

FREE RODENT MANAGEMENT TRAINING

Learn how to manage rats and mice by applying simple rodent prevention strategies!

Where: Peter J. Sharp Residence (223 East 117th St. New York, NY 10035

When: August 24, 2011
9:30am—1:30pm

RSVP: email
mhunter@doe.org or call
(646) 739-4016, or online
www.pestatrest.com/training

Lunch will be provided!

Offered by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and the Association for Energy Affordability and Ready, Willing and Able

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Five Tips to Find Hazardous and Toxic Chemicals at your Workplace:

1. Smell – not all chemicals have an odor, but if you smell something, you could already be breathing it!
2. Taste – not all chemicals have a taste, but if you taste something, you could have swallowed it!
3. Experiencing immediate symptoms – symptoms such as coughing, tearing, headache, nausea, nose and throat irritations could mean that you have already come in contact with the chemicals
4. Dust – if you see dust collected on surfaces, it was in the air before it collected on the surface
5. Particles in nose or throat – coughing up mucous or blowing your nose and finding that it is colored could mean that you have breathed in chemicals in particles. Particles are small pieces of the chemicals.



Four Tips to Minimize Hazardous Substances and Exposure to them:

1. Educate – learn and know about the types of hazards that can be found at your workplace. Your boss or manager should have information for you on what dangers are present, and actions you can take to minimize your exposure to them!
2. Eliminate – stop the use of products that contain hazardous substances and practices that lead to exposure to hazardous substances
3. Control by
 - using alternative substances that are less hazardous
 - containing the reactions that create hazardous substances in a closed space
 - using local exhaust ventilation to prevent hazardous substances from spreading in your workplace
 - using dilution ventilation to lower the concentration of hazardous substances that spread in your workplace
4. Protect yourself by wearing protective gear such as masks, gloves,



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Do-it-Yourself Recipes for Non-Toxic Cleaners

Many types of safe cleaning products can be easily made at your own home with common ingredients!

Some common ingredients and their uses are:

- Baking soda: removes odor, cleans surfaces, and good for scouring
- Borax*: cleans and removes odor. Can be found in the laundry section of grocery stores
- Vinegar: kills bacteria, mold, and viruses
- Lemon juice: removes grease
- Soap

Here are some simple recipes for cleaners:

Type of Cleaner	Recipe
All-purpose cleaner (Countertops, floors, walls, mirrors)	1/2 gallon warm water 1/2 cup vinegar 1/4 cup baking soda Mix and store in a spray bottle. Scrub with sponge
Window and glass cleaner	1 quart warm water 2 teaspoon vinegar or 2 tablespoons of lemon juice Mix and store in spray bottle Scrub with sponge
Toilet bowl cleaner	Sprinkle baking soda, then pour vinegar into bowl and scrub with toilet bowl brush
Basin, tub and tile cleaner	Using a moist sponge, scrub surface with baking soda
Mildew remover	1/2 cup vinegar or lemon juice 1/2 cup borax in warm water Mix and store in spray bottle. Scrub off mildew with sponge
Disinfectant	2 teaspoons borax 4 tablespoons vinegar 3 cups warm water Mix and store in a spray bottle
Degreaser	2 tablespoons vinegar 1/4 teaspoon liquid soap 2 cups hot water Mix and store in a spray bottle. Scrub with sponge
Carpet stain remover	1 quart water 1 quart vinegar Mix and store in a spray bottle. Spray on stain and leave it for several minutes. Clean with warm soapy water using sponge



For green products, check out:

- Seventh Generation
www.seventhgeneration.com
- Method www.methodhome.com
- All-Green Janitorial Products
www.all-greenjanitorialproducts.com
- Green Works

* Make sure to clean properly after using solutions with borax because it can trigger allergies

Sources:

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You are invited to TRAC's summer BBQ, Saturday August 13th, from 1pm - 5pm, at the [Carmenville Playground](#) on 152nd and Amsterdam Ave..

Transit Riders in Northern Manhattan and all across the city have faced 3 fares hikes in 3 years, the elimination of over 30 bus routes, and transportation decisions that are not benefiting all New Yorkers equally. [WE ACT for Environmental Justice](#) recently launched our grassroots campaign, the Transit Riders Action Committee (TRAC), to organize, educate and advocate for fare and equitable transportation policies in Northern Manhattan.

Please join us for our campaign kick-off BBQ on August 13th. ***There will be free food, music, games and educational workshops (Spanish translation provided).*** Also, a special thanks to our partners at the [TWU Local 100](#) and the [Rider Rebellion](#) for their support and participation at this event.

For more information or to RSVP please contact: burke@weact.org or [212-961-1000](tel:212-961-1000) ext. 312.

Hope to see you soon! Please share with all your fellow Northern Manhattan transit riders.



Estás invitado a la parrillada de verano de TRAC, el sábado 13 de agosto de 1-5pm, en el Carmenville Playground en la calle 152 y Amsterdam Ave.

Los pasajeros de transportación pública del norte de Manhattan y de toda la ciudad han sufrido 3 aumentos en las tarifas de transportación en 3 años, la eliminación de sobre 30 rutas de autobuses y desiciones de transportación que no benefician a todos por igual. WE ACT para la Justicia Ambiental emprendió una campaña de bases y fundamentos recientemente, para organizar, educar y abogar por una política de tranportación en el norte de Manhattan que sea imparcial y equitativa para la comunidad.

Acompáñanos para la inaguración de nuestra campaña en la parrillada del 13 de agosto. Habrá comida, música, juegos y talleres educativos (traducción al español disponible) También tendremos un agradecimiento especial a nuestros compañeros del TWU Local 100 y de Rider-Rebellion por su apoyo y participación en el evento.

Para más información, o para RSVP por favor contactar: burke@weact.org o al [212-961-1000](tel:212-961-1000) ext. 312

¡Esperamos verte pronto! Por favor comparte esta información con tus compañeros pasajeros de los medios de transportación pública del norte de Manhattan.

