

5 Steps for Staying Safe on the Job

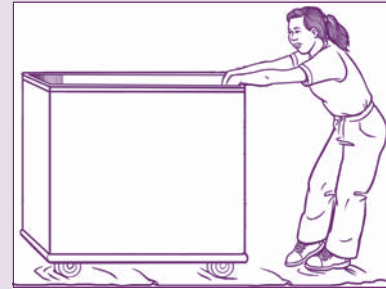
—Young Workers Doing Hotel Cleaning—

1. Get safety training
2. Look for hazards in your workplace
3. Follow safety rules
4. Know your rights
5. Ask questions and get help



Cleaning hotel rooms may seem like safe work, but there are definitely safety problems to watch out for. Find out what to do so you do not get hurt, like these young workers did....

“We have to lift beds and push and pull heavy carts all day. One day, as I was pulling a heavy cart, there was a sharp pain in my back. I couldn’t move without hurting. I had to miss work for a week, and it keeps coming back.”



“The hotel guests are rude and sometimes get angry and yell at us. They think we are there just to work for them. It makes me scared and makes my stomach hurt.”

“I have to clean everything with strong cleaning chemicals. The chemicals make my hands cracked and dry, but we don’t have any gloves to wear. They also make me cough when I use them.”



It’s your boss’ job to make sure your workplace is safe!

This factsheet is for young people who work as hotel cleaners. U.S. laws require employers to provide *all* workers with a safe place to work. There are also laws that give special protection to *younger* workers. Not all employers know about or follow these laws, and the laws are not always enforced. But it is important for you to know what your employer *should* do.

In hotel work, your boss can do a lot to improve safety. For example, your boss should:

- Provide safe equipment, such as good carts or trolleys for moving linen and laundry.
- Schedule your workload so that you can complete tasks without working too fast or for too many hours.
- Provide a security system to protect you and other workers from abuse by hotel guests.
- Give you proper gloves if you use cleaning chemicals.
- Provide cleaning products that do not hurt your skin or cause headaches.

It's your job to follow the 5 steps for staying safe!

1. Get safety training

The boss must train you to do *every* task that's part of your job, like how to handle any chemicals you need to use, how to lift safely, or what to do if there is abuse from a hotel guest.

2. Look for hazards in your workplace

If you work cleaning hotel rooms, there are things that can hurt you or make you sick. You can spot these hazards before they cause a problem.

3. Follow safety rules

Use your training to protect yourself and other workers. Do every task the way you have been trained. Keep your eyes open and report any problems you see.

4. Know your rights

U.S. and state laws protect workers on the job. There are also special laws that protect workers under 18. These laws say:

- Employers must provide a safe workplace.
- Employers must provide workers' compensation to pay your medical expenses and lost wages if you get injured.
- Workers under 18 may not do certain dangerous tasks, and may only work certain hours (not too late, too early, or too long).

For more information go to www.youthrules.dol.gov or www.osha.gov/SLR/teenworkers.

5. Ask questions and get help

Pay attention. If something seems unsafe, ask about it. If you don't know how to do a task you are given, ask a co-worker or your boss for help. If that does not work, get help from someone else, such as a safety or union representative, teacher, or parent. For more information, contact:

- National Young Worker Safety Resource Center, www.youngworkers.org.
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration, Teen Workers page, www.osha.gov/SLTC/teenworkers.
- U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, www.youth.eeoc.gov.
- Your state labor dept., www.youthrules.dol.gov/states.htm or your state OSHA, www.osha.gov/dcsp.osp.

The *5 Steps for Staying Safe on the Job* series includes an overview pamphlet on young worker job safety and specific factsheets on:

- Construction
- Agricultural Field Work
- Hotel Cleaning
- Restaurants & Food Service
- Motor Vehicle Repair
- Working in Shops & Stores

Hazards in Hotel Work

Here are some hazards you need to watch out for, and some things you can do about them once you are trained and know the safety rules.

	HAZARDS	WHAT YOU CAN DO
BODY STRAIN	Lifting, bending, and reaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get help when lifting heavy items. • Follow these safe lifting methods: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bend your legs , not your back, when you pick up something heavy. • Hold the heavy item close to your body. • Move to face the heavy object before you lift instead of twisting your body.
	Doing the same motion over and over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a cart to move linens, laundry, or other heavy items. • Push rather than pull carts.. • Take regular rest breaks, even just short breaks to stretch your body. • Take turns with other workers to do different types of tasks. • Pad your knees (with a mat or towel) and change your position often when you work on your knees.
FALLS	Slippery and cluttered floors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean up spills immediately. • Keep floors picked up. • Never run or move too fast. • Do not carry items too tall for you to see over. • Wear shoes with non-skid soles. • Use a ladder or footstool to reach objects up high. Never stand on the edge of a bathtub, bed, or chair.
CHEMICALS	Laundry and other cleaning products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for information about the chemicals you use. • Read labels and follow instructions before using. If you do not understand the label, write down the name and ask someone for help. • Wear goggles and gloves when needed. Your boss should provide them. • Do not mix chemicals together.
STRESS	Angry or abusive guests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you are being yelled at or harassed by anyone, get help from a co-worker or your boss. • If someone continues to harass you at work, get help from a trusted friend or community organization outside the workplace. • Do not work alone in a hotel room if hotel guests are present.
OTHER	Diseases from hotel guests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash hands with soap often, especially after handling soiled linen or cleaning the bathroom. • When you handle trash cans or bags, watch out for syringes, razor blades, or other things that might hurt you or spread disease.
	Electric shocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not touch or plug in electrical equipment when your hands are wet. • Do not use equipment that has a frayed cord or is damaged. Tell your boss about it.