Workers put at risk of occupational diseases as firms flout guidelines on safety equipment

In Singapore – passed out while cleaning a chemical tank, the worker in his 30s said: “When washing the tank, we can’t see anymore. So we remove our goggles and the lens of the goggles become all black and we put on our goggles and the lens of the goggles becomes all black and we put on our goggles and the lens of the goggles becomes all black...”

Examples of regulations involving workplace health and safety in Singapore

**Job task**

**Health and safety, personal protective equipment (PPE)**

- **Health**
  - Respiratory protection
  - Skin and eye protection
- **Safety**
  - Fall protection
  - Personal protective equipment

**Regulations, expert guidelines**

- **Appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) should be used in noisy sectors.**
- **Workers to be given eyewares and earplugs.**
- **Lifting heavy materials, work surfaces with mildest impact.**
- **Companies to observe safe work practices; ensure workers do not work more than 49 hours a week and observe rest intervals.**

**Invisible to the eye**

- **Chemical hazards:**
  - Exposure to toxic chemicals, including solvents, acids, bases, and heavy metals
  - Respiratory and eye irritation
  - Skin irritation and burns
  - Neurological effects

- **Physical hazards:**
  - Musculoskeletal disorders
  - Repetitive strain injuries
  - Noise-induced hearing loss

- **Psychological hazards:**
  - Work-related stress
  - Mental health issues

- **Infectious diseases:**
  - Exposure to bloodborne pathogens
  - Exposure to infectious agents

**Possible consequences:**

- **Health effects:**
  - Acute and chronic effects
  - Immediate and long-term effects

- **Workplace deaths and injuries: 2017 numbers**
  - Workplace deaths: 37
  - Workplace injuries: 5,552

- **Reported number of occupational diseases last year:**
  - 21,645

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