ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH HAZARDS

Unsafe and insufficient water for drinking and washing, inadequate sanitation and hygiene, hazardous healthcare waste and climate-related risks may cause work-related diseases and injuries among health workers.

Keys facts

- One third of health facilities do not have what is needed to clean hands where care is provided.
- About 800 million people use health facilities with no toilets.
- One in four health facilities have no water services.

Preventive measures:

Water, sanitation and hygiene:
- Ensure availability of safe and adequate supply of water for medical activities, drinking, personal hygiene, food preparation, laundry, and cleaning.
- Provide toilets for patients, staff and carers.
- Ensure safe disposal of health-care waste using environmentally friendly technologies.
- Keep laundry and surfaces in the health-care environment clean.
- Store and prepare food in a way that minimizes the risk of disease transmission.
- Design, construct, and manage buildings to provide a healthy and comfortable environment for patients, staff and carers.
- Protect patients, staff and carers from vector borne diseases.
- Encourage correct use of water, sanitation and waste facilities.
- Ensure adequate ventilation to prevent airborne infections.

Climate-related disasters and emergencies:
- Assess the potential workplace hazards and plan mitigation measures.
- Ensure the availability of sustainable water, sanitation, environmental, chemical and health-care waste management services.
- Determine safe staffing levels, with rostering and credential systems for ensuring operational sufficiency.
- Develop post-disaster employee recovery assistance programmes and ensure psychosocial support.
- Establish an early warning system and risk reduction plan to respond to climate-related emergencies.
- Ensure adequate prevention and management of heat strain and heat-related illnesses.
- Develop contingency plan for safe and secure evacuation following an extreme event.
- Put in place security measures for safe and secure evacuation of staff and patients.
- Train staff in protecting their health and safety during an emergency.

Source: