

# 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:

<https://www.who.int/tools/occupational-hazards-in-health-sector/environmental-health-hazards>

Global Occupational and Workplace Health Programme  
Department for Environment, Climate Change and Health

World Health Organization  
20, avenue Appia  
CH-1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland  
[workershealth@who.int](mailto:workershealth@who.int)

<https://www.who.int/activities/protecting-health-and-safety-of-health-workers>

