Workers’ Voice in the Greening of California: The Intersections of Work, Health and the Environment

California currently leads the U.S. in the movement towards a green economy, which has the potential to shape the health and livelihood of millions of Californians in the coming years by addressing some of the most critical environmental crises today involving toxics, climate change, energy use, and pollution, while also creating a dynamic new source of jobs.

One aspect of the new economy is “green cleaning,” which offers an opportunity to reduce the quantity of hazardous chemicals entering landfills and the environment while also reducing worker and consumer exposures to chemicals at work and in the home. Although the move to green cleaners is important and needed, little is known about these products from the perspective of workers who use them in greatest quantity (i.e., janitors, domestic workers, home care workers, hotel housekeepers, and hospital cleaning staff).

Through roundtable discussions and interviews, this study evaluated the health impact of green cleaning products from a worker perspective, and began developing effective interventions and policy recommendations to protect workers from potentially harmful chemical exposure and/or ergonomic problems.

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