

INFORMATION AND TRAINING

Companies who supply or hire out cleaners should provide enough information for operators to use them safely. Also, your employer should make sure that you are trained to use the equipment safely, and to understand the safe system of work.

The future availability and accuracy of the references listed in this publication cannot be guaranteed.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Electrical risks from steam/water pressure cleaners Guidance Note PM29 (Second edition) HSE Books 1995
ISBN 0 7176 0813 1

Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998. Approved Code of Practice and guidance L21 (Second edition) HSE Books 1998 ISBN 0 7176 1626 6

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This guidance is issued by the Health and Safety Executive. Following the guidance is not compulsory and you are free to take other action. But if you do follow the guidance you will normally be doing enough to comply with the law. Health and safety inspectors seek to secure compliance with the law and may refer to this guidance as illustrating good practice.

MAIN PRECAUTIONS

Use a residual current device (RCD) or earth monitoring device, with cleaners that have flexible cables, and check that it is working daily.

Check flexible cables and plugs/sockets daily for visible signs of damage and do not use if damaged or faulty.

Always wear eye protection during use.

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First published 03/98.

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STEAM / WATER
PRESSURE
CLEANER?

YOU COULD
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DO YOU USE A STEAM/WATER PRESSURE CLEANER?

YOU COULD BE IN FOR A SHOCK!

FAULTY STEAM/WATER PRESSURE CLEANERS KILL PEOPLE EVERY YEAR

These machines make work areas wet. They may also make you wet. Because of this, if you receive an electric shock from a faulty machine, it is more likely to be dangerous. Electric shocks from this equipment can also cause serious burns.

Most shocks occur when electrical faults make the metal lance at the end of the flexible hose, or the machine's casing, live. However, some shocks occur when people spray into equipment that is still connected to an electrical supply.

ELECTRICAL SAFETY

The safest way to use a cleaner is to fix it in one place, with permanent wiring to the supply. This is because the parts of cleaners that most often fail are the flexible mains cable and its connections to the plug and to the cleaner.

To prevent failures of flexible cables, try to route the cables away from the work area, and not across paths where they might get caught and pulled, or run over and damaged. This includes any extension cable, because it too will be most likely to fail at its connections at the plug and the socket. You should also make sure that there is a residual current device (RCD), or an earth monitoring device in the electrical supply to the cleaner. These devices will detect most dangerous failures and cut off the supply.

You should regularly check for any signs of damage to the plug, splits or cuts in the cable sheath, or any slippage of the cable in the cable grip at either end. You should not be able to see the brown, blue or green and yellow coloured wires inside. Check this before you use the cleaner, or once a shift if it is in constant use.

You should also look for loose or broken covers over electrical parts. You could get a shock if water gets into the wrong parts of the cleaner. Report any faults that you find to a responsible person.

Remember that faulty cleaners can kill. Do not use a faulty steam or water pressure cleaner.

MAINTENANCE

Besides the checks that you make, someone also needs to carry out more detailed visual checks. Once a week is about right if you use the cleaner daily. Someone needs to test the earthing and insulation of the cleaner every three months, or more often if the cleaner is used on a construction site or similar workplace. The person who does this work may be the owner, a contractor, or an electrically competent person in your company. They may find it useful to keep a written record in a log book, to remind them when the next maintenance is due, and to show any faults that keep occurring.

Also, it is strongly recommended that a competent person tests the electrical installation to which you connect the cleaner. They should do this at least once a year, starting before you first use the cleaner.

NON-ELECTRICAL RISKS

High pressure jets can force the fluid through the skin and this can be dangerous. No-one should stand in front of the cleaning jet. Also, the spray from your cleaner could drift into other work areas, or over other people, and this could be dangerous too.

You should always wear suitable eye protection while the machine is working, and you may need special clothing such as wellington boots and waterproofs to protect you.

