

Keeping our Families Strong

A Health and Safety Handbook for Nail Salon Workers



ACRJ
ASIAN COMMUNITIES FOR
REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE



**“Remember the source
of the water you drink from.”**

Folklore reference shared in the Vietnamese community

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INTRODUCTION

Most of us who work in nail salons do so, so that we can provide for our families and our communities. Unfortunately, many of the products that we use every day contain chemicals that are harmful to our health and safety. In order to keep our families strong, we not only need to work but we also need to protect our health.

Emerging economic and environmental pressures will demand that industries that use toxic chemicals - like nail salons - shift towards less toxic or “green” practices. We want nail salon workers and owners to be ready for the transition to ensure that their businesses continue to thrive in the future.

This handbook shows workers and owners how you can take both large and small steps toward a “greener” salon so that we can protect our jobs, our health and our families all at the same time. A number of suggestions in this handbook are also related to regulations monitored by the California Board of Barbering and Cosmetology. These examples demonstrate how compliance with these regulations also supports one's health and safety at work.

We hope that you find one or two things that you can implement from this book in your daily work routine. We also hope that you share the tools, knowledge, and experience with your fellow colleagues in the nail salon community.



WHAT IS IN NAIL POLISH THAT CAN HURT MY HEALTH?

"Because the economy has changed, I had to change the way I ran my business in order to continue to thrive and do well. Our clients wanted more natural nails, so we began to offer organic treatments and treatments that use less toxic products, such as acetone-free nail polish remover and three-free nail polishes. It was important for the salon to make these changes not only because our customers wanted it, but also because it has great benefits for nail salon workers and owners. We did not change everything in our salon at once; rather, we made gradual changes."

-Xinh, nail salon worker

The **"toxic trio"** of chemicals commonly found in nail polishes are toluene, formaldehyde, and dibutyl phthalate. These are three of the many chemicals that can have an adverse impact on the health of people who are exposed to them on a regular basis. "Three-free" products are those that do not contain any of these harmful ingredients.

CHEMICAL

TOLUENE

IMPACT

- Irritates eyes, nose, throat, skin, nervous system, reproductive system and lungs.

FORMALDEHYDE

- Causes watery eyes and burning feeling in the eyes and throat.
- Makes breathing difficult and inhaling it can trigger or worsen asthma.
- (Suspected to) cause allergic skin rash or contact dermatitis.

DIBUTYL PHTHALATE

- (Has been known to) cross into the placenta and stop the transport of cholesterol in the body.
- Causes problems with how testosterone is made, might lead to serious changes to the sexual organs of males.
- Causes abnormal development of the prostate gland.

NAIL POLISH: WHAT CAN I DO?

Given the way that toluene, formaldehyde, and dibutyl phthalate impact your health as a nail salon worker, you can switch out your nail polish to “three-free” products or water-based products.

“Three-free” products don’t have the “toxic trio” of chemicals and are therefore healthier for our bodies than other products. However, “three-free products” do still have solvents like acetone that produce toxic fumes that evaporate and can cause many health problems like ear, nose, skin and throat irritation; headaches, dizziness and nausea; and damage to the central nervous system. Water-based polishes are “three-free”, free of artificial coloring agents, and do not have solvents. This greatly decreases the health impacts on our bodies.

However, some people are concerned about the quality of water-based nail polish. Some downsides to using water-based nail polishes are:

- There is a slower drying time.
- They are generally more expensive.
- They are more difficult to remove from nails as time passes. On toenails, it takes more effort to remove because toenails have less natural oils.

There are many nail polish options that are “three-free”. Here is a list of the few brands we found people using in nail salons in Oakland. We suggest that you contact each company by phone or through their website to learn more about their line of “three-free” products.

Brand Name & Lines, Approximate Cost per Bottle, and Purchasing Information

Adoree
\$5.00
www.esthersnc.com; 619-800-0362

China Glaze (black label)
\$1.50-5.00
Local beauty supply stores

Color Nail lacquer
\$5.95
www.olanlabs.com; 1-800-645-1616

OPI (green label)
\$2.50-5.00
Local beauty supply stores

Orly International
\$4.00-5.00
www.orlybeauty.com; 818-994-1001; or
www.amazon.com

Lumene Quick and Chic
\$3.50
www.abeautifulsecret.com

Sinful Colors
Professional nail enamels \$2.00-2.50
Professional base coat \$4.00
Professional nail hardener \$4.00
www.sinfulcolors.com; 301-937-6061

Here a list of recommended brands of water-based nail polishes:

Honey Bee Gardens*
(Watercolors Non-Peel Off)
\$5.00-7.00
www.esthersnc.com; 619-800-0362
www.honeybeegardens.com/product/natural-cosmetics/npwcne.html

Suncoat*
\$7.00-10.00
www.suncoatproducts.com; 519-820-5468

* Must use same brand name of polish remover in order to remove water-based nail polish



WHAT IS IN POLISH REMOVER THAT CAN HURT MY HEALTH?

Acetone is a solvent that is in many products used to remove polish. Just like the acetone in polish, acetone in remover can cause health problems like ear, nose, skin and throat irritation; headaches, dizziness and nausea; and damage to the central nervous system.

Polish Remover: What can I do?

At most nail supply shops in Oakland, acetone and non-acetone polish removers cost the same price for the same amount, so switching to non-acetone remover is an easy and affordable option.



WHAT IS IN ARTIFICIAL NAILS THAT CAN HURT MY HEALTH AND WHAT CAN I DO?

The chemicals and glues used for acrylic nails release many toxic vapors and small dust particles into our salons. These chemicals can harm our eyes, skin, throat and lungs and can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, drowsiness, hand numbness and pain. In addition, the dust particles that are created when filing artificial nails can cause respiratory problems.

There may be a cost-effective alternative to acrylics in the future. In the meantime, check your liquid products for Methyl Methacrylate (MMA)¹. This chemical was banned in 1974 but independent testing has found that traces of MMA are still present in many nail products.² And in addition, it is best to make sure the salon has proper ventilation and the workers use protective equipment, like the N95 mask, when applying and filing acrylics.

WHY ARE GOOD VENTILATION SYSTEMS IMPORTANT FOR MY HEALTH AND WHAT CAN I DO?

Ventilation is crucial for workers health and is advised by the California Business and Professions Code.³ Research has shown that nail salons should approach ventilation in two ways:

One: Local exhaust systems that filtrate chemicals and dust

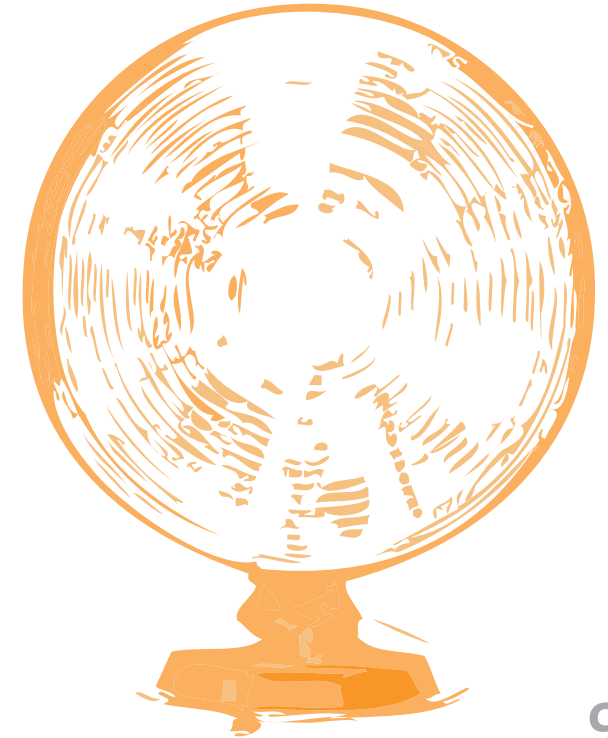
These can be moved around to different manicure tables and spa chairs. If the cost of purchasing a system is too much, it may be possible to rent one. Local exhaust systems can be purchased at www.salonpureair.com (1-800-236-1889), www.ccibeauty.com/CC-DM331V.html (1-800-708-0789) or nail equipment shops. Check out <http://www.emendee.com.au/ordering.html> (best by email) for rentals.

Two: General ventilation systems that bring outside air into the salon

The goal is to bring in 25 cubic feet per minute per person of outside air through systems such as fans and air conditioners.

Other simple steps to increase the air quality in the salon:

- Open the windows and doors to let fresh air in before beginning the workday. If weather permits, keep windows and doors open at all times during regular business hours to increase air circulation.
- Keep all chemical containers (both original and refillable) tightly closed when not in use.⁴
- Make sure that each technician's workstation has a metal trashcan with a tight-fitting and self-closing lid.⁵ Trashcans should be lined with plastic bags, and all trash should be removed from the salon at the end of the workday.
- Keep the tops of ventilated tables or any other vents clear from any obstructions like towels so that the ventilation systems work properly.⁶



WHY ARE SANITIZING ALTERNATIVES IMPORTANT FOR MY HEALTH AND WHAT CAN I DO?

Many salons use Barbicide to sanitize nail tools. Barbicide contains chemicals that can be irritating if inhaled and the effects tend to get worse over time. An autoclave is a machine that uses pressurized steam to sanitize which is healthier. Using the autoclave will also reduce waste disposal because it only uses water, whereas large quantities of Barbicide need to be shipped to waste disposal facilities. The autoclave has the potential to reduce health effects; however, the drawback is the price of the machine. You can do comparison-shopping at www.amazon.com and local supply shops.

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WHY ARE CLEANING SUPPLY ALTERNATIVES IMPORTANT FOR MY HEALTH AND WHAT CAN I DO?

In our daily work within salons, we come into contact with a wide range of cleaning products. The BBC mandates that foot spas are cleaned with a virucide, bactericide, and fungicide solution after every client and that a detergent is used to clean the tub as well, at the end of each day. The cumulative exposure that nail salon workers and owners experience is significant. We are exposed to a wide range of chemicals throughout the day, so any way we can use products with less toxic chemicals takes us one step closer to reducing our exposure.

Many of the products we purchase to clean floors, bathrooms or other common areas can actually be made using non-toxic ingredients that can be purchased from your local drug store. Below are some simple recipes that you can use in your home or nail salon.

All Purpose Cleaners

1 quart warm water
1 teaspoon liquid soap
1 teaspoon borax

1/4 cup undiluted white vinegar

Directions: Mix ingredients and store in a spray bottle. Use for cleaning countertops, floors, walls, carpets and upholstery.

Toilet Bowl Cleaner

Put 1/4 cup borax in toilet bowl and let set overnight. Scrub off the next day.

Vinyl Floor Cleaner

1 gallon warm water
1/2 cup white vinegar or 1/4 cup borax
Directions: Mix together in large bucket and mop floor.

Glass Cleaner

1 quart warm water
1/4 cup white vinegar (or 2 tablespoons lemon juice)
Directions: Mix ingredients and store in a spray bottle.

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WHY IS PERSONAL CARE AT WORK IMPORTANT FOR MY HEALTH AND WHAT CAN I DO?

"I have worked in the nail salon industry for the past 15 years. As an immigrant to the United States, the nail salon industry is one of the only ways that I found to make a living and support my family without needing extensive schooling or English language skills. As a nail salon worker, I noticed that my body becomes very sensitive to the smell of the chemicals and products that I use in the salon. My skin is easily irritated and becomes very itchy throughout the workday. My eyes are constantly red from chemical exposure that sometimes I have to stop working all together. Although I wear a mask, my hands and arms become itchy, dry, and raw when I work on a clients nails. My nose, throat, and lungs often times feel very hot and like they are burning when I use the blue solution to clean out the foot spas. My body is also very worn out and tired at the end of each day. Though it has not happened to me, I know people in the nail salon industry who were unable to carry a pregnancy to full term or have cancer and we think that it is caused by working in the nail salon industry."

-Thuy, nail salon worker

While we don't have control over every aspect of our work, here are a few steps you can take to decrease your exposure to chemicals and increase your health.

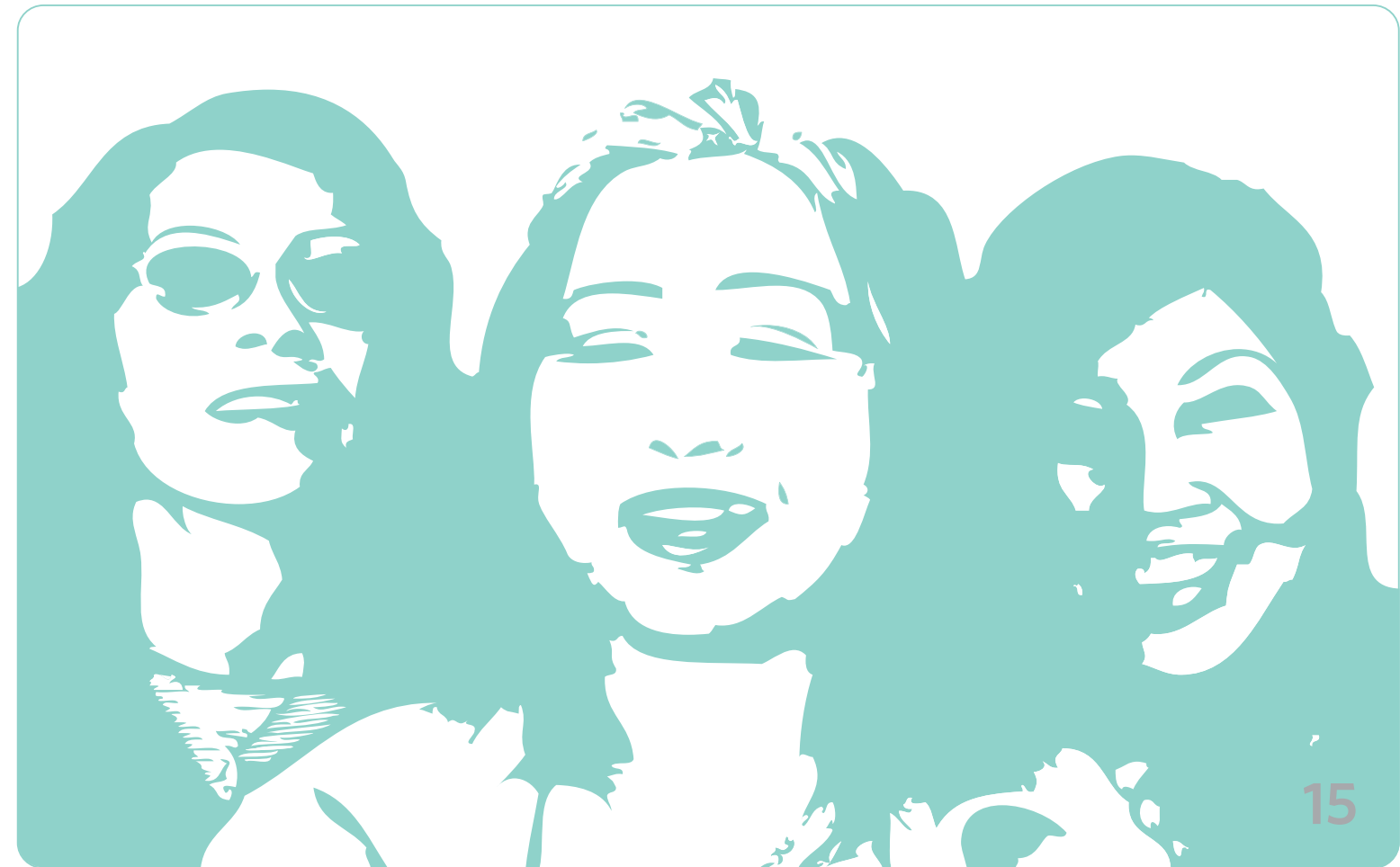
- Take your breaks outside whenever possible to get fresh air.
- Do not eat, drink, or store food at the worktables.
- Wash hands (top and palm) thoroughly and frequently
 - (1) before and after working on customers,⁷
 - (2) before eating or drinking, and
 - (3) after handling products.

CONCLUSION

This handbook provides a variety of tools, ideas, and resources to help you create a healthier workplace environment for you, your family, and for the broader community. Making changes in your workplace is one small way that you can create larger scale change in your community in order to ensure the good health and success of our businesses and our families.

Beyond the actions we take at our individual salons, we can join together to make sure that the needs and concerns of our community are heard. Because of the voices and collective action of nail salon workers and owners, the California Board of Barbering and Cosmetology began to produce materials in multiple languages, including Vietnamese and Spanish. There is much more to be done and it is up to the workers and owners in the nail salon community to be leaders in creating change in the industry.

We challenge you to do everything that you can to reduce your exposure to toxic chemicals. We challenge you to make changes in your workplace, talk to your coworkers and your colleagues in the industry, and work together across the industry to encourage government to make changes that have workers and owners in mind.



RESOURCES

Community Resources

The community resources listed below are relative to Alameda County and the wider Bay Area. Most have staff that speaks Vietnamese. Research community resources for your particular region or city.

Asian Health Services

Resources: Provide primary behavioral, medical, and dental healthcare services, youth program and community health advocacy.
510.986.6800 www.asianhealthservices.org
818 Webster Street Oakland, CA 94607

Asian Law Caucus

Resources: Provide education to nail salon workers and owners in San Francisco and Oakland, CA.
415.896.1701 www.asianlawcaucus.org
55 Columbus Avenue San Francisco, CA 94111

Asian Pacific Islander Legal Outreach

Resources: Free/low cost legal consultation.
510.251.2846 www.apilegaloutreach.org
1305 Franklin Street, Suite 410 Oakland, CA 94612

Worksafe

Resources: Provide workplace health and safety tools and resources, workplace safety related legal support.
510.302.1027 www.worksafe.org
55 Harrison Street Oakland, CA 94607

Vietnamese American Community Center of the East Bay (VACCEB)

Resources: Provide elderly program, afterschool tutoring center, summer youth program.
510.891.9999 www.TheVCC.org
655 International Blvd. Oakland, CA 94606

California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative

Resources: This is the main organization in California that provides a range of resources and policy advocacy on behalf of nail salon workers and owners throughout California. Their main offices are located in Oakland and Los Angeles. 213.385.5834 www.cahealthynailsalons.org
Lisa Fu, ProgramCoordinator lfu@cahealthynailsalons.org

Green/Small Business Resources

City of Oakland Community and Economic Development Agency (CEDA)

Resources: Promote sustainable development in Oakland through healthy environment, economy, and equity
510.238.4973 www2.oaklandnet.com/government/o/CEDA/index.htm
1 Frank H. Ogawa Plaza Oakland, CA 94612

The Opportunity Fund

Resources: Financial education, micro-finance loans, micro-savings accounts, and affordable house financing; operates for people residing in the Bay Area. Check out similar organizations in your region or city.
408.297.4599 www.opportunityfund.org

Government Resources

California Safe Cosmetics Program

Resources: Provide information on hazardous and potentially hazardous ingredients in cosmetic products sold in California and makes it available to the public.
1.877.325.3223
www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/cosmetics/Pages/default.aspx

Hazard Evaluation System Information Services (HESIS)

Resources: Use scientific, medical, and public health expertise to prevent workplace illness and disease.
510.620.5757
www.cdph.ca.gov/programs/hesis/Pages/default.aspx

Alameda County Small Business Hazardous Waste Disposal, Stop Waste.Org

Resources: Dedicated to achieving the most environmentally sound solid waste management and resource conservation program.
510.891.6500 www.stopwaste.org
1537 Webster Street Oakland, CA 94612

California State Department of Barbering and Cosmetology (BBC)

Resources: Ensure the health and safety of California consumers by promoting ethical standards and by enforcing the laws of the beauty industry.
1.800.952.5210 www.barbercosmo.ca.gov
2420 Del Paso Road Suite 100 Sacramento, CA 95834

California Department of Occupational Safety and Health (Cal/OSHA)

Resources: Help various industries and workers comply with multi-agency regulations and advance safety; numerous offices located throughout the state.
1.800.963.9424 www.dir.ca.gov/dosh
1515 Clay Street Suite 1901 Oakland, CA 94612

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End Notes

- 1.Department of Consumer Affairs Board of Barbering and Cosmetology, Article 12 Health and Safety, Title 16, Division 9 California Code of Regulations Section 989
- 2. Source: Connecticut Department of Public Health
- 3. Department of Consumer Affairs Board of Barbering and Cosmetology, Article 12 Health and Safety, Title 16, Division 9 California Code of Regulations Section 995(a)
- 4. Ibid Section 979(b1)
- 5. Ibid Section 978(a2)
- 6. While there is no specific regulation for this, Sections 987(a) regulates that all soiled towels must be deposited in a closed receptacle until properly laundered. And Section Sections 987(c) regulates that all clean towels must be stored in closed cabinets. And lastly, Section 994(a) and (b) regulates that all equipment must be in good repair and without accumulation of waste or refuse.
- 7. Ibid Section 983(b)