Waste & Recycling Operations: Biological, Chemical and Equipment Hazards Picture This



This image shows a waste and recycling facility where workers are sorting mixed materials along a fast-moving conveyor line. One worker is handling waste without proper gloves, coming into direct contact with leaking bags and unknown substances, while another is clearing a jam near moving equipment without locking it out. Nearby, a container with chemical residues is open and improperly labeled, releasing vapors into the work area. The floor is wet and cluttered with debris, increasing slip and trip hazards, while sharp objects and broken glass are visible among the waste being processed.

In waste and recycling operations, serious injuries and illnesses often occur when biological, chemical, and mechanical hazards combine in unpredictable ways. Exposure to contaminated materials can lead to infections, contact with hazardous chemicals can cause burns or respiratory issues, and unguarded or energized equipment can result in crushing or entanglement injuries. These risks escalate quickly when proper PPE is not used, equipment is not isolated before maintenance, and hazardous materials are not properly identified or controlled. Always wear appropriate protective equipment, treat all waste as potentially hazardous, follow lockout procedures before clearing jams, and maintain strict awareness of your surroundings to prevent serious harm.