



SAFETY MATTERS

RISK MANAGEMENT NEWSLETTER

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JANITORIAL AND CUSTODIAN SAFETY

OBJECTIVE 7 Safety Tips for Janitors and Custodians

Janitors and custodians who provide services in schools face a variety of tasks and associated hazards. It is important to be prepared with formal instruction and training. Below are helpful safety tips for janitors and custodians.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Clothing

Wear comfortable, slip-resistant shoes to avoid slips and falls, along with long-sleeved shirts and long pants to protect your skin. Put on chemical-resistant gloves and splash goggles when pouring, mixing, and using chemicals. Use work gloves to protect your hands when you do odd jobs. Use safety glasses to protect your eyes from debris and dust.

Caution with Chemicals

Read the Safety Data Sheets of chemicals used to clean, disinfect, and strip surfaces. Chemicals are often concentrated, so knowing and using the proper mix ratio is critical. Stay in well-ventilated areas and never mix chemicals unless instructed by the manufacturer. Always take extra caution around hot water to avoid burns.



Body Mechanics

Janitorial tasks include heavy lifting, material handling, and repetitive motions. To avoid back strains and injuries:

1. Keep your muscles strong and stretch before, during, and after work.
2. Take mini breaks throughout the day and rotate your tasks.
3. Learn proper lifting techniques and know what you can safely lift; always ask for help with heavy or awkward loads.

Equipment

Hand trucks, rolling buckets, and housekeeping carts help move heavy loads and keep supplies nearby. Make sure to keep them in good condition with easy-rolling wheels. When moving, keep the load in front of you and lean in the direction you are going. Always push the load; pulling can lead to strains and injuries. Watch for people, obstacles, slopes, and drop-offs in your path. Remember, when working at heights, to practice ladder safety.

Floor Maintenance

Perform floor maintenance when just a few people are around, and always use caution signs for wet floors and spills. Mopping and sweeping are repetitive motions, so avoid a tight grip and use proper posture. Vacuums, floor stripping, and waxing machines must be inspected daily and before use. Be sure to keep cords coiled and close to you to avoid tripping yourself or anyone else.

Garbage Removal

Removing garbage, recycling, paper, and debris from the workplace is a good housekeeping and fire prevention practice. However, garbage bags may contain broken glass and other sharp materials, such as needles, possibly with blood and body fluids. Always wear work gloves and carry the load away from your body. Therefore, you should never reach into a garbage can or pack it down with your feet.

Communication

Know the common hazards in your work environment. Because you move throughout the buildings or school sites, you may be the first to spot a hazard. Place a warning sign near hazards and report them immediately. Everyone's safety depends on you.

Resources

- [Janitorial Safety, State Compensation Insurance Fund](#),
- [Working Safer and Easier for Janitors, Custodians, and Housekeepers; Cal/OSHA Department of Industrial Relations](#)

This California Schools JPA fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.

