



# Janitorial Safety

Janitorial/custodial workers play a key role in keeping the workplace operating safely. As they work to keep other employees and visitors safe, they often come into contact with hazards that increase their risk of injuries from slips/falls, material handling material handling, chemical exposures and transmissible diseases. There are steps employer's can take and general guidelines janitorial/custodial workers should follow to prevent unnecessary injuries.

## General Janitorial and Custodial Safety Rules

- Do not obstruct exit pathways such as hallways or stairs.
- Use caution when mopping floors – use signage to mark wet/slippery floors.
- Do not use chemicals that you have not been properly trained to use.
- Read the labels on the container to ensure you understand the hazards of the cleaning chemicals. Report any containers that are missing labels.
- Do not store flammable or combustible materials by boilers or other heat sources.
- Use care and proper handling techniques when dealing with hazardous trash such as broken glass, wires, rusty metals, etc.
- To move a load when your hands are full, use a cart and keep the load light. Never let a load obstruct your vision when traveling in hallways or stairways.
- Also avoid upper torso twisting motions.

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## Slip, Trip and Fall Prevention

Slips, trips and falls are extremely common when dealing with slippery, wet or cluttered floors. To prevent slips, trips, and falls:

- Wear comfortable, slip resistant shoes, long-sleeved shirt and pants.
- Be alert and watch where you are going to ensure you have a clear path.
- Check the conditions of floors, stairs, ladders and work areas. Report defects immediately and avoid unsafe areas until they have been repaired.
- Place signs when a floor area is wet/slippery.
- Clean up spills immediately after they occur.
- Perform floor maintenance when fewer people are around.
- Keep walking and working surfaces clean, dry, and unobstructed. Keep passageways to exits clear.
- Cover cords and cables that cross walkways.
- Keep working areas and hallways well-lit.

## Safe Ladder Use

Ladder accidents are normally caused by improper selection, care or use. Some of the more common hazards involving ladders, such as instability, electrical shock and falls, can be prevented. Prevention requires training, correct ladder selection, good work procedures and adequate ladder maintenance.

### Using a ladder:

- Read and follow the manufacturer's instruction label (attached to the ladder) before use.
- Choose the proper ladder for the task.
- Keep ladders clean and do not use ladders that are visibly damaged.
- Only one person on a ladder at a time.
- Place the base of an extension or single rail ladder following the 1ft:4ft rule.
- Make sure the base is level and on solid ground.
- Fully open step ladders.
- Maintain three points of contact.
- Do not stand on the top two rungs.
- Do not reach over the side of the ladder
- Do not try to "walk" a ladder by rocking it. Climb down and reposition it.
- Do not use a ladder as a horizontal working platform or bridge.

## Bloodborne Pathogens & Transmissible Diseases

All equipment and work sites that may be contaminated with human blood or other potentially infectious human body fluids must be cleaned by trained employees.

- Always assume that equipment and work sites that may be contaminated with human blood or other human body fluids are infectious.
- Use the proper PPE: gloves, masks, glasses and clothing.
- Use proper clean-up procedure - household bleach diluted in water (10% concentration) or other disinfectants should be used.
- Label and use bags or containers with the proper hazard potential labels.
- For additional information on transmissible disease safety, [click here](#).



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## Hazard Communication for Chemicals

As an employee, you have the right to know what chemicals you are working with and how you might come into contact with them.

- Know where to find Safety Data Sheets (SDS) in the workplace.
- Be alert and obey labels and warnings of dangers.
- Report any missing hazard labels on containers.

## Back Injury Prevention

For a custodian or janitor, back injuries can greatly impact job functions since a lot of the work includes a lifting, material handling and repetitive motion. Avoid injuries by using proper technique or equipment when lifting heavy loads.

- Stretch prior to lifting a load
- Bend your knees
- Arch your back
- Hug your work
- Never twist and lift
- Use assist devices and equipment when available.

## Sprain and Strain Prevention

Repetitive motion is the major cause of sprain and strain injuries. The most common causes of repetitive motion injuries are:

- Awkward posture for a long period of time.
- Too much force overloading muscles and tendons.
- Repetitive use of the same muscles and joints to perform any given task.

Avoid injuries by:

- Using an assist device or adjustable tools and equipment (e.g. adjustable mop handles, carts, etc.).
- Reducing motions such as bending, twisting and reaching. Be mindful of safe manual lifting, weight of load, force of push or pull, and force to arms and wrist.