

Custodial Safety

From the "Custodial Training Manual" by Educational Facilities Group

Before a worker is trained to use a piece of equipment or chemical, (s)he should be trained on safety measures. The majority of accidents are caused because of improper training and careless attitudes on the part of all toward accident causing situations. Here are a few actual accidents that commonly take place in schools, with suggested ways in which they could have been prevented:

1. Custodian falls from a ladder that slipped while putting in light bulbs and receives injury to shoulder. (Ladder should be well secured with rubber feet.)
2. Phosphoric acid splashes into eye of custodian while (s)he is pouring solution into container. Eye is badly burned. (Should use proper safety equipment.)
3. Custodian received puncture wound when using screwdriver to repair dishwasher. (Should use proper size screwdriver.)
4. Custodian received back injury from moving heavy object. (Get help, training.)
5. Custodian slips and falls on wet floor or object and injures arm, elbow or wrist. (Wear nonskid shoes when working in wet area. Keep spills mopped up and keep objects picked up that should not be on the floor.)

Some of the common hazards that may exist are listed below with suggested corrections:

Dangerous Conditions	Suggested Correction
Broken furniture	Remove it from service.
Slippery floors	Remove cause (grease, water, etc.)
Nails	Remove or drive them in.
Broken window	Remove fragments with pliers, use cardboard to cover the hole, and ask the building principal or manager to send a work order.
Obstructions in corridors	Remove. Keep hall and corridors or hallways clear. Do not leave equipment where it creates a hazard.
Moving heavy equipment	Use a dolly and secure assistance.
Broken glass and debris on lawn	Remove. Keep hall and corridors or hallways clear. Do not leave equipment where it creates a hazard.
Entries and exits blocked	Remove obstacle.
Loose desks	Tighten bolts or screws.
Splintered floors, wall, desk, etc.	Remove splinters.
Bare or defective wiring	Turn off switch and report at once.
Oily rags or paper	Place in fireproof containers.
Leaky gas connection	Report at once.
Standing on chairs	Do not stand on furniture. Use step ladder of proper size.



A good custodian must always be alert for health or accident hazards endangering children or adults. Hazards resulting from broken equipment or other unusual building conditions should be reported to the proper authority at once.

Lifting

Improper carrying and lifting cause many accidents. In custodial work we are constantly lifting, pushing, carrying. If not properly done, strained muscles will result. Following are some tips:

1. Clear travel path.
2. Size up for weight and bulkiness. Get help for heavy loads.
3. Face load squarely with firm footing.
4. Lift slowly and evenly by straightening the legs.
5. Hold load close to the body.
6. Turn with the feet.

Ladders

The ladder is probably the most abused piece of equipment. The blame cannot be placed on the ladder. It is the user and condition of the equipment that is the real cause of accidents. Because ladders are involved in so many accidents, frequently of a serious nature, the following are safety tips concerning ladders:

1. Select the right ladder for the job to be done.
2. When on a straight ladder, never work above the fourth rung from the top.
3. Never use stepladders more than 20 feet long.
4. Never stand on top of a stepladder unless it has a guardrail.
5. Never use extension ladders beyond 60 feet.
6. Be sure that fixed ladders are attached firmly to the building.
7. Never place a ladder against a movable surface.
8. Always protect the person on a ladder.
9. Use rubber sole shoes when climbing a ladder.
10. Never carry tools in hands while going up or down ladder. Put them in a tool belt or use pulleys.
11. Never use two ladders spliced together.