

RISK SIMPLIFIED

RESOURCES:

Custodian Training Guide
([English](#)) ([Spanish](#))

Chemical Hazards
([English](#)) ([Spanish](#))

Ergonomic Hazards
([English](#)) ([Spanish](#))

QUESTIONS:

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Prevent Injuries When Cleaning Floors

by Scarlett Sadler

While most students and teachers are daydreaming about their exciting summertime activities, custodians are thinking about their summer facility cleaning schedules. Most school facilities have minimal pupil traffic during the summer months, making it the prime time to deep clean floors and other surfaces.

The following equipment safety tips can be used as a refresher for custodial staff operating equipment, to complete tasks such as vacuuming, scrubbing, or polishing floors.

Electrical Safety

- De-energize all equipment before performing inspections, maintenance, changing accessories/pads/filters, or when not in use.
- Check the condition of the electrical cord before using machines/equipment. If electrical cords are frayed or worn, immediately tag it as "do not use" and remove from service.
- Check to ensure the plug has its grounding prong, or that the cord is double insulated. If not, immediately tag it "do not use" and remove it from service.
- Never unplug equipment or machines by pulling from the electrical cord. To unplug, grasp the plug, not the cord. Do not handle the equipment's plug with wet hands.
- Do not pull or carry the equipment by its electrical cord.
- If equipment is found to be defective, tag it "do not use" until it can be repaired.



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Slips/Trips/Falls

- Use caution when using equipment near the top of stairs or other elevated surfaces to avoid falling.
- Wear slip-resistant footwear.
- Keep electrical cords out of aisle ways to minimize trip hazards for you and your coworkers.
- Wet floor signs should be set up on both ends of the areas being cleaned.



Strain Prevention

- Avoid awkward postures.
- Whenever possible, push the equipment instead of pulling it.
- Avoid overextending your arms (in any direction).
- Use the minimal amount of grip to control the machine
- When mopping, periodically rotate between figure 8 patterns and back and forth motions. All the while, keeping the mop handle as close to your body as possible.
- When turning, use your feet and waist to pivot instead of twisting from your torso.
- Take rest breaks and stretch periodically throughout the day.



Chemical Safety

- Review Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for all cleaners or chemicals being used.
- Use only specified cleaning agents with equipment per the manufacturer's recommendations. Follow the SDS's instructions for use and disposal.
- If conditions warrant, or as indicated on the SDS, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as safety goggles, respirators, or gloves.
- Fumes from floor strippers can be toxic. Ensure adequate ventilation when stripping floors. If ventilation is not sufficient, a respirator may be required.
- Never by-pass safety features.



- Do not use any equipment without proper training.
- Always ensure nuts and bolts are tight and hose connections are snug before using equipment
- If fueled by propane, do not alter or reconstruct the fuel system.
- Avoid dropping or inserting foreign objects into the equipment's openings
- Never use equipment to pick up anything that is burning or smoking, such as cigarettes, matches, or hot ashes.
- Keep hair, loose clothing, jewelry, fingers and all parts of the body away from openings and moving parts.

