



RISK MANAGEMENT

TEXAS WOMAN'S UNIVERSITY

Ergonomics for Custodians

Throughout the day, custodians perform numerous tasks such as vacuuming, mopping, and taking out the trash, which can place stress and discomfort to the body, especially if not done properly. These jobs require force, repetition, and awkward postures, all of which can lead to injury with poor technique over time. Below are a few suggestions to help custodians perform their work in a safe manner.

Attire

- Wear comfortable, slip resistant shoes that offer support
- Wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for the specific task (i.e., gloves, goggles when working with corrosive chemicals)

Finding the Right Tools

- Use long-handled tools, as appropriate, when cleaning items low to the ground (i.e., toilets) or items high up (i.e., dusting high places) to prevent excessive bending at the waist, or excess extension
- Use tools with padded handles, or add foam grips for cushion to improve your hand grip
- Use knee pads or a knee rest if you must be on your knees for long periods of time

Organizing Your Supplies

- Avoid lifting or stacking items above shoulder height
- Store lighter items on top shelves, and heavier items on the floor or lower shelves

Work Organization

- Alternate light tasks and heavy tasks throughout the day. Do heavier tasks when you have more energy
- Take frequent micro-breaks (30-60 seconds) to stretch your back, neck, or shoulders
- Stretch regularly throughout the day to increase blood circulation to muscles and relieve muscle tension

Vacuuming/Mopping

- Stand upright and keep elbows close to your body
- Alternate between your left and right hand to avoid fatigue
- Pad the handle to cushion and improve your grip
- Avoid extreme reaches to the right and left, and avoid twisting
- Avoid excessive bending of wrists

- Use a portable hose with an adapter to fill the mop bucket, do not lift the bucket to a normal sink. Be sure not to overfill the bucket.
- To empty water from bucket, bend with your knees and keep back straight while lifting the bucket if floor drain/faucet is not available

Sweeping

- Do not bend your back.
- Use lightweight brooms, standup dustpans, and lobby brooms. They allow you to remain upright. If needed, bend your knees and not your back.
- Add a foam sleeve over the broom handle for a more comfortable grip, if necessary.

Moving Large Trash Cans/Carts

- If they tip, let go of it! Don't try to stop it; you can strain your back
- Stock the cart or can only with materials you will need.
- Set up a caddy and a caddy apron at opposite sides of the can. Weight is more evenly distributed, and it is less likely to tip over.
- Place the most frequently used products/tools closer to you.
- Pay attention to uneven surfaces. With a firm grip, push the can slowly to prevent it from tipping.

Taking out trash

- Keep back straight and bend at your knees while removing trash bags
- Alternate between your left and right hand while carrying trash bags to prevent fatigue
- Ask for assistance or use a mechanical aid (i.e., dolly, rolling trash can) to carry trash bag to trash bin for heavy bags
- Use a step stool next to the dumpster to dump trash bags, as necessary. It will reduce lifting above shoulder height.
- Lay trash containers on their side when emptying. This relieves suction of the bag in the container and avoids lifting heavy loads about the waist.
- Bend at your knees and carefully lift (NEVER SWING) bags into dumpsters.
- Ask for assistance for heavy bags.