

Janitorial Safety Course

Welcome to the Janitorial Safety e-learning course.

The objectives for this course are:

1. The student will be able to effectively perform assigned duties and tasks in a safe manner.
2. Demonstrate the safety precautions necessary to avoid accidents and injuries while performing common janitorial tasks.
3. And exercise the proper procedures for reporting injuries.

Let's get started!

Janitors, custodians and housekeepers are cleaning workers for offices, schools and homes. They provide a vital service in our society. By keeping offices, schools and homes clean, janitorial workers provide us with healthier environments that are much appreciated by everyone.

A lot of people may think that being a janitorial worker is an easy job. In reality, janitorial work can be a physically demanding and hazardous job. Let's discover what safety procedures and precautions can help you to have better job conditions.

Janitorial Safety Tips

In all jobs, safety plays an important role; this is also true for janitorial workers. In the janitorial field, safety starts with you. Let's cover some basic safe work practices that you should follow in your workplace.

Number 1: The use of appropriate work attire

First, let's talk about what to wear at work. It is important that you wear the appropriate attire to work. Wear comfortable slip-resistant shoes to avoid slips and falls. Most of the detergents used for cleaning contain different kinds of chemicals that can cause harm if not used properly. Wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants to protect your skin from any chemical contact. Put on chemical-resistant gloves and splash goggles to protect your eyes when pouring, mixing and using chemicals. In this way you can protect your hands and eyes from any possible spills. As you can see, dressing appropriately for work is very important for your own safety. Finally, remember to always demonstrate a clean and professional personal appearance including good personal hygiene.

Number 2- Ergonomic Hazards

Lifting heavy equipment, repetitive movements and bending often are very common tasks for janitorial workers. But they can represent physical or ergonomic hazards if not done properly. Ergonomic injuries include strains, sprains, and other problems. These injuries can be caused by: performing the same motion over and over again (such as vacuuming); using physical force (for example, lifting heavy objects); or being in an awkward position (like when you twist your body to reach a light bulb).

- To avoid these injuries, it is recommended that you:
- Take rest breaks. Rotate tasks. Alternate between the left and right hands.
- Keep your back and wrists straight. Keep your elbows close to your body.
- Avoid extreme reaches.
- For backpack vacuums, empty the vacuum bag often to lighten the vacuum.
- Use lightweight mops. Pad the mop handle and the bucket handle.
- Garbage bags can contain anything including sharp glass pieces. These can hurt you if they are not disposed of properly. If you carry garbage bags, use hand gloves and keep the bag away from your body if possible.
- If you are not feeling well, report symptoms immediately, such as discomfort or numbness, to your immediate supervisor. Address symptoms and hazards quickly.
- Use the proper lifting techniques to prevent back injuries and possible muscle strains.

When you are lifting heavy equipment do not do it alone; ask for help if needed. Also use housekeeping carts to help carry cleaning equipment from one place to another. This will also protect you from physical hazards.

Number 3- Chemical Hazards

Janitors can become sick if exposed to toxic chemicals contained in products like floor strippers or cleaning solutions.

- Use mild cleaners for regular cleaning. Save stronger chemicals for stubborn stains. Specialized chemicals (such as metal or window cleaners) are often the most toxic.
- Dilute chemicals (such as disinfectant) with as much water as possible while still getting the job done. Follow the manufacturer's directions on the product label.
- You must open windows and doors, if possible, when using chemicals. Proper ventilation will avoid the inhalation of harmful fumes of the cleaning detergents used.
- Do not mix chemicals unless instructed by the manufacturer.
- Close all containers; especially spray bottles, when not in use.
- Pour chemicals (such as toilet bowl cleaner) from a low height to avoid splashing.

- Remember, you must wash your hands properly before eating so that germs and harmful chemicals are not swallowed.

What is the Material Safety Data Sheet?

A Material Safety Data Sheet is a document that contains information related to:

- the chemical components present on the cleaning product and the use of it
- the best way to store and handle it,
- the emergency procedures and potential health effects related to any hazardous material that the product may include.

The Material Safety Data Sheet contains much more information about the product materials than the label on the container. These are prepared and written by the manufacturer of the material used.

What is the purpose of a Material Safety Data Sheet?

The purpose of a Material Safety Data Sheet is to inform you of the following:

- The kind of chemicals that were used to create that cleaning product.
- Any health effects that make it dangerous to handle.
- The level of protective gear needed to work safely with the material. For instance, do you need to use gloves, safety glasses, or an apron?
- The first aid treatment to be provided when someone is exposed to the material.
- The preplanning needed for safely handling spills, fires, and day-to-day operations.
- And finally, how to respond to accidents.

It is important that you are familiar with this data sheet to protect yourself and others.

Chemical Storage

There are some common sense safe storage procedures that should be followed to keep you and the workplace free of chemical-related accidents.

Here are some examples you can follow:

- Keep chemicals in their original containers and do not remove the labels.
- Store chemicals in well-ventilated areas, away from direct sunlight or other heat sources, and away from sparks, flames, static electricity or other sources of ignition.
- Never store chemicals higher than your eye level. If the chemical is accidentally knocked over you could risk being showered with the chemical substance resulting in serious injuries.
- Chemicals should never be stored or refrigerated with food.

- Don't casually leave chemical containers wherever you last used them or set them aside to make room for other work. Take the time to return the containers to their proper storage place.
- Make sure empty containers or damaged chemicals are disposed of properly.

Number 4- Electrical hazards

Working with electrical equipment (such as vacuum cleaners and floor scrubbers), especially when water or moisture is present, can expose you to electrical current. Electrical currents can cause shock, injury, and sometimes death. Equipment like vacuum cleaners and floor machines should be used when few people are around the area. It is important that the wiring and the electrical fittings of all the electrical equipment you will be using can be checked every day before use.

- Keep electrical equipment (such as vacuum cleaners) away from water, including wet floors.
- Dry your hands before touching electrical equipment.
- Make sure equipment is in the "Power off" position before plugging it into an outlet.
- Immediately turn off the power if you smell burning plastic or smoke, if you see sparks, or if you feel tingling or a shock. Do not use the equipment. Report the problem to your employer.
- Disconnect an electrical plug by pulling on the plug, not the cord.
- Remove garbage, recycling, paper and debris from the workplace as a fire prevention measure.

Number 5- Slips and falls

Slips and falls can be caused by wet floors, uneven carpets, ladders, and other things. To prevent slips and falls:

- Clean up spills immediately.
- Place warning signs on the wet floor to ensure no one walks on it.
- Use caution when stripping and waxing floors.
- Be careful, some chemicals make floors slippery.
- When using electric equipment, keep cords coiled and close to you to avoid tripping.
- Always use a ladder or footstool to reach for objects. Never use a box or cart.
- When using a ladder, always remember to:
 - Put the ladder on a stable, dry surface.
 - Check that it is fully open and locked.
 - Check that your shoes are clean and dry.
 - Do not stand on the top two rungs of the ladder.

Number 6- Injuries on the Job

Every workplace should have a plan for handling injuries. Employees need to know when and how to report injuries. Identify where first aid kits are kept and get emergency medical treatment right away if needed.

Remember your employer's procedure for reporting injuries. You need to notify your supervisor immediately. Your supervisor will seek medical assistance for you. After that, he or she may need to complete a safety inspection to verify that the corresponding measures have been followed to avoid another accident.

In conclusion,

Being a janitorial worker is an important job in our society. Imagine our schools, hospitals, and offices if we did not have good janitors to take care of them. As a janitor you need to be prepared and receive the proper instruction to be able to perform your daily routine tasks in the safest way for you and others around you.

Know the common hazards in your work environment. Because you move through the building, you may be the first to spot a hazard. Place a warning sign near hazards and report them immediately. Safety depends on you.

Thank you for participating in the Janitorial Safety training course. Complete the final knowledge check in order to receive your certificate of completion.

Credits:

1. The Janitorial Safety Training Program developed by the Labor Occupational Health Program (LOHP) at the University of California, Berkeley as part of the Worker Occupational Safety and Health Training and Education Program (WOSHTEP).
2. Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) website at <http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/hazardcommunications/index.html>.
3. Squeak e Clean- The cleaning storage area <https://nationalvetcontent.edu.au>