



## Avoiding Cleaner/Custodial Injuries

Our custodians keep schools safe and clean for students and staff. When they maintain good health, they can continue providing this important service. Custodian injuries are an increasing trend among our school district members, partially because of the physical activity required throughout the day. It seems custodians are always on the go, addressing routine and special requests from staff.

Custodial workers experience a variety of injuries at work, most commonly:

- **Exposure to hazardous chemicals.** Custodial staff use chemicals that can damage nasal passages and lungs if appropriate safety gear isn't worn and when chemicals are mislabeled or mishandled. The Public Employee Safety and Health Bureau (PEOSH) requires personal protective gear when working with hazardous materials, clear labeling of these substances, and appropriate training on these hazards to help eliminate incidents in the workplace.
- **Back and shoulder injuries.** These injuries are caused by lifting, overexertion, and repetitive motion. Heavy housekeeping carts and buckets of water that must be lifted to be emptied contribute to these injuries. Workers can be provided with special equipment and training that makes their required tasks, like lifting, mopping, and reaching, less dangerous.
- **Slipping and tripping hazards.** As custodians are relied upon to keep public spaces free of slipping and tripping hazards, they are naturally exposed to them. When custodians address wet floors, icy sidewalks, and spills, they're also at risk of falling. Staff often use ladders to change lightbulbs or clean shelves or fixtures and can fall from heights when completing these tasks. Protect employees from these injuries by providing slip-resistant footwear, safe equipment, and proper training for working at heights.

Reducing the number of injuries depends on employers creating safe environments, providing appropriate equipment, and proper employee training. Additionally, all employee injuries should be reviewed to identify the cause and establish mitigation guidelines to reduce the likelihood of a recurrence.

For further information and safety videos, access the [Comp Alliance Academy](#) or visit [Safety Source Online](#). Both platforms contain informative safety training videos for your custodial staff.