

Custodial Safety Guidelines



Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management Department

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I. PURPOSE

Custodians provide cleaning and upkeep services for the buildings and facilities on campus, and in doing so may be exposed to a variety of safety hazards. The purpose of these custodial safety guidelines is to create awareness of common custodial hazards and provide safe work practices and procedures to minimize or eliminate these hazards. The goal is to reduce and prevent workplace accidents and injuries.

II. SCOPE

The safety guidelines described in this manual apply to all custodial staff on the campus of Stephen F. Austin State University (SFA) and any other faculty, staff, or student employee conducting custodial duties during their course of work. The SFA Safety Department routinely consults with custodial supervisors to improve general safety practices and conditions by providing safety training and current information aimed at protecting employee health and safety.

III. RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management (Safety Dept.)

1. Review, audit, and revise this plan every 3 years or anytime processes or regulatory guidance changes.
2. Evaluate and inspect custodial procedures on campus in collaboration with custodial supervisors upon request or when safety concerns are reported or identified.
3. Stop or suspend work when safety hazards or unsafe practices are reported or observed until the appropriate safety measures are put in place.
4. Investigate accidents and injuries involving custodial staff to determine the root cause and prevent future recurrence.
5. Provide safety training to address common custodial hazards and best practices to avoid accidents and injuries.

B. Supervisors

1. Provide appropriate safety and personal protective equipment (PPE),
2. Ensure that all employees are provided training on a regular basis by attending Safety Department led training classes or job site supervisor led trainings,
3. Provide site specific Hazcom (chemical safety) training,
4. Make all chemical Safety Data Sheets readily available to employees for the chemicals they use, and
5. Provide copies of all safety training records to the SFA Safety Dept. through email to safety@sfasu.edu or campus mail to Box 6113.

C. Employees

1. Use all PPE and other provided safety equipment properly,
2. Notify supervisor when additional PPE is needed,
3. Attend all required safety trainings. Arrange for a makeup training with your supervisor if absent,

4. Report and hazardous conditions to your supervisor immediately, and
5. Follow all procedures and guidelines described in this manual.

IV. SAFETY GUIDELINES

The safety guidelines in the sections below should be followed at all times. Notify your supervisor or the SFA Safety Dept. with any recommendations to improve custodial safety procedures. Your input is always welcome.

A. General Safety Guidelines

1. Lift heavy objects the proper way by keeping your knees bent and your back straight. Always get help when necessary.
2. Report safety hazards and any recommendations for improvement to your supervisor.
3. Be sure to pay attention to all safety signs and notices. They are there for your protection.
4. Disconnect fans and other electrical equipment from the electrical outlet before cleaning them.
5. When cleaning and navigating stairs, look down to see where your footing is, watch your step and use the handrail.
6. Report any accident no matter how insignificant it seems (i.e. cut finger, banged knee, etc.) on the Accident/Injury 24 hour Quick Link on the [Safety Dept. website](http://www.sfasu.edu/safety) at www.sfasu.edu/safety.
7. When emptying trash cans, twist and tie the top of the bag then lift the bag out holding on to the top only. Don't put your hands or arms around or under the bag. A sharp object could poke through the bag and cause an injury. Never reach into a trash can to remove waste.
8. Never handle trash containing chemical or biohazardous waste. Contact the Safety Department at 468-4442 for proper disposal assistance.
9. When cleaning up broken glass or sharp objects, wear gloves to pick up the large pieces then sweep the area. Place all broken glass or sharp objects in a rigid container such as a cardboard box or bucket for disposal. Don't place these items directly into plastic bags. Follow up by vacuuming the area to get any remaining pieces.
10. Large trash bags should not be stuffed completely full. They may become too heavy to lift by grabbing the top. Limit bag contents to no more than 35 gallons.
11. Maintenance areas and custodial closets should be kept neat and organized.

B. Custodial Closets

Custodial closets should be used to store all custodial equipment and supplies. Storage is never allowed in mechanical rooms or stairwells. Custodial closets should contain the following safety supplies and meet these safety guidelines:

1. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for the chemicals used in that building or instructions on how to locate the SDS.
2. Safety glasses or goggles.
3. Disposable gloves.
4. "Wet Floor" signs.
5. Rags or paper towels or spill clean-up.
6. All chemicals must be stored at or below eye level.

7. All containers must be properly labeled.
8. Wet mops must be hung up to dry.
9. Mop buckets must be stored empty.
10. No food or drinks where chemicals are stored.
11. Check equipment cords for frayed or damaged wires and discontinue use until they are repaired or replaced.

C. Slips, Trips, & Falls

Slips, trips, and falls are the most common cause of injuries on campus. Follow these safety tips to prevent these accidents while performing custodial duties:

1. Wear rubber sole non-slip shoes or non-slip shoe covers when working on wet surfaces, mopping floors, and stripping/waxing floors.
2. When mopping, stripping, and waxing floors, start at the corner of the room farthest from the exit door and work your way toward the exit to avoid walking on wet floors. When conducting this work in a hallway, complete one side of the hallway at a time to allow yourself and others a dry surface to walk on. Close off these areas when possible and always use "Wet Floor" signs to warn others of the hazard.
3. When stripping floors, ventilate the area well by opening doors or windows and using fans. This will allow hazardous fumes to escape the building and provide faster drying times.
4. Floor stripping and waxing should be done after hours or during low traffic times.
5. Use extreme caution when mopping stairs. Start at the top and work your way down by standing on the stair below or two stairs down to avoid stepping on wet stairs. Always place "Wet Floor" signs at the top and bottom of the stairs before you start.
6. In wet weather, rubber mats or runners should be placed near entrance areas. This will help eliminate dangerous falls and help prevent the tracking of mud and water onto clean/dry floors.
7. Always place "Wet Floor" signs whenever a wet floor is noticed.
8. Avoid carrying large or heavy loads on stairs. Use elevators whenever possible.
9. Never leave extension cords, equipment, or mop buckets unattended. These can create a trip hazard for others.
10. Never carry loads that obstruct your vision. Get help to carry the load or use a dolly or cart.
11. Submit a work order or report to your supervisor anytime a damaged floor that could pose a trip hazard is noticed.
12. In the event of an icy floor or sidewalk, the snow should be shoveled away and salt or an ice melting product should be spread on the icy areas to quickly create a safe walking path.

D. Chemical Safety

1. Read all chemical safety data sheets for the chemicals in your area before use paying close attention to the hazards, required Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and spill clean-up procedures.
2. Chemicals shall always be in clearly marked containers. If you transfer a chemical to a secondary container, it must also be properly labeled.
3. Flammable chemicals must be stored in approved flammable storage cabinets.

4. Use solvents in well-ventilated areas. Replace the cap on the container after each use.
5. Always use the appropriate PPE, such as safety glasses or gloves, for the chemicals you are using as indicated by the SDS.
6. Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after using chemicals and before eating, drinking, or applying cosmetics.
7. Avoid touching you face when using chemicals before you've washed your hands.
8. If a chemical comes in contact with your skin, wash thoroughly with soap and water. If a chemical splashes in your eyes, rinse with large amounts of water for at least 5 minutes. Report all accidents to your supervisor and seek medical attention if necessary.
9. Refer to the SFA Hazard Communication Manual on the Safety Department website at: [https://www.sfasu.edu/safety/documents/SFASU_Hazard_Communication_Manual_2020\(1\).pdf](https://www.sfasu.edu/safety/documents/SFASU_Hazard_Communication_Manual_2020(1).pdf) for more information on chemical safety.

E. Equipment Safety

1. Be aware of how you carry your equipment, mops, brooms etc. so that no one is injured by protruding handles.
2. In areas with low ceilings, take special care to avoid hitting sprinkler heads to avoid severe water damage.
3. Inspect and maintain equipment regularly. Never used equipment that is damaged or in need of maintenance.
4. Ladders should be kept in good repair and properly used. Refer to the SFA Ladder, Scaffolding, and Fall Protection Safety Program at: https://www.sfasu.edu/safety/documents/2020_Ladder_Scaffolding_and_Fall_Protection_Safety_Program.pdf for more information.
5. Be sure that switches on electrical equipment are in the off position BEFORE plugging in the appliance.
6. Floor buffing machine handles should be in the lowered position before starting them and in the upright position for storage.
7. Floor buffing machine brushes, pads, and attachment plates should be manually secured to the machine before the motor is turned on and checked before each use. Make sure the machine is unplugged before checking or securing brushes or pads.
8. Keep floor buffing pads clean. This makes the buffer easier to control and prevents sharp objects from sticking to them which could cause injury or damage to the floor.
9. Loose clothing or jewelry should never be worn around moving parts of machinery.
10. Always use the right tool for the job.