



Lead, Serve, Support

January 29, 2019

Ergonomics... for Custodians

Throughout the day, custodians perform numerous tasks including picking up and emptying trash, mopping, dusting, vacuuming, washing windows, etc., which can place stress on the back shoulders, arms, hands, and wrists and result in a repetitive stress injury (RSI).

Remember to THINK ERGONOMICS...

When selecting tools:

- ✓ Use **lightweight microfiber mops** which require less force to wring out. Select mops which can be easily detached and laundered.
- ✓ Use **long-handled brushes when cleaning toilets** to prevent excessive bending at the waist.
- ✓ Choose tools with **lightweight telescopic poles** to extend your reach and prevent stretching, over-reaching and/or excessive bending
- ✓ Use tools with **padded handles or add foam grips** to cushion and improve your grip.
- ✓ Use **knee pads or a knee rest** if you must be on your knees for any length of time.



Custodians... unsung heroes of our schools. They're often the first to arrive each morning and the last to leave at the end of the day. They pick up trash and clean-up the messes no one else wants to deal with. They mop the floors, wash the windows, and scrub the toilets while befriending everyone they see!

Inspect and properly maintain equipment:

- ✓ **Make sure wheels/casters on equipment are clean and well lubricated** so they roll easily.
- ✓ **Check and change filters on vacuums regularly**, to enhance their performance and prevent motors from overheating.
- ✓ **Tag, remove from service, and report broken or malfunctioning equipment** so it can be repaired as soon as possible.

When vacuuming/mopping:

- ✓ Maintain a **natural posture with an upright stance**.
- ✓ Keep your **arms close to your body**.
- ✓ **Avoid over-reaching**.
- ✓ **Alternate right and left hands at the top of the handle** to avoid fatigue.

When organizing supplies:

- ✓ Store **lighter items on the top** shelves.
- ✓ **Avoid lifting/stacking heavy items above shoulder height** whenever possible.

Wear comfortable shoes - Your feet will thank you!

Work Organization makes a BIG difference:

- ✓ **Stretch regularly...** at the start of the shift to and regularly throughout the day to increase circulation/blood to muscles and relieve muscle tension.
- ✓ **Alternative heavy and lighter tasks throughout the day** to avoid using the same muscle groups for prolonged periods.
- ✓ **Take frequent micro-pauses** to stretch your back and relax your muscles.

If using a backpack style vacuum:

- ✓ **Adjust the harnesses to fit your body** following the manufacturer's instructions so:
 - The weight of the vacuum rest on your hips; not your shoulders.
 - The straps do not cut into your body or interfere with movement of your upper extremities.
- ✓ You may be able to adjust where the canister attaches to the harness which helps if you are taller or shorter.
- ✓ **Use the windshield wiper technique** to cover more ground per step and prevent fatigue. **Hold the wand close to your body and turn your torso, hips, and knees from side to side at your waist** instead of pushing the wand back and forth.



Ergonomics... It's about **WORKING SMARTER, not harder, and staying in your COMFORT ZONE!**

Email safety@ncesd.org to request a free ergonomic assessment with a NCESD Loss Control Specialist.

SAFETY MATTERS



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