Custodial Safety refers to the safety procedures while performing cleaning and up-keep for the buildings on campus. Custodians may encounter a variety of safety hazards. By following safe operating procedures, we can help to prevent these work-related injuries.

**Equipment Safety**
Necessary equipment to get a job/task done correctly and efficiently, can be hazardous if used improperly or with incorrect techniques. There are certain safe operating procedures that need to be followed to decrease the chance for an incident and possible injury.

**Custodial Closets**
- **CUSTODIAL CLOSETS SHOULD BE LOCKED AT ALL TIMES!** If a student employee needs access to a closet for work related purposes, they will first need to complete a background check and the supervisor needs to request access from the Facilities Services Office using the correct forms and procedures.
- Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) for all chemicals stored in the closet should be readily available for reference. If the MSDS book is not stored in the closet, the employee should know where a book is located.
- Safety glasses and rubber gloves should be available in the instance the custodian will be mixing cleaning chemicals.
- “Wet Floor” signs should be on hand.
- All chemicals must be stored at eye level or below.
- All containers must be properly labeled.
- Wet mops must be hung up to dry.
- Mop buckets must be emptied before storing- not standing water or chemicals.
- Food cannot be stored near chemicals.
- Equipment cords cannot be frayed or have exposed, bare wires.

**Wet Mop and Mop Bucket**
- Any wet area can create a hazardous situation. This hazard can be reduced by exercising simple procedures when working on a wet floor. **Slipping is a major cause of knee and back injuries.** Wear shoes with non-slip soles when working on wet floors.
- Protect others in the area from slipping on a wet floor by putting up the proper signage. Put up “Wet Floor” signs before beginning your work.
- Leave the mop bucket in places where is can be seen. Don’t leave it hidden behind furniture, doors, around corners, or at the top/bottom of stairs.
- When rinsing a mop/mop bucket, be careful not to splash any of the chemical/dirty water in your face and eyes, clothes, or exposed skin.
- Mopping can put excessive strain on your back. To avoid this kind of stress, use a light-weight mop and hold the handle in a way that keeps your back as straight as possible. To avoid overreaching, take an extra step towards the area you are mopping.
- Rinse the mop and bucket thoroughly after each use and after cleaning up any type of chemical spill. (Only clean up a chemical spill if the chemical has been identified and you know the proper cleaning procedure for that type of chemical).

**Vacuum Cleaner**
- Inspect the vacuum before use- make sure the bag is in place and the machine is not damaged in any way.
  - Be sure to check the cord and prongs for any damage before plugging machine in.
Check the vacuum head and wand for damage before use.
- Report any damage to your supervisor or the Supply Manager.
- Never unplug any equipment in offices or labs.
- Never use the vacuum on any type of liquids.
- When finished using the machine, wrap the cord, change the bag (if necessary) and put the machine back in its proper place.

**Wet Vacuum**
- **Never vacuum up flammable liquids!**
- Remove the dry vacuum bag before use (if necessary).
- Check for Squeegee, hose, cord and wet floor tool prior to use.
- Make sure all parts are with the machine when you return it.

**Buffer**
The buffer is a more specialized machine. Caution must be exercised when operating this machine - they can be very destructive when not used properly.
- Before using the buffer, make sure that the drive plate and buffing pad are securely attached.
- Unplug the buffer before setting the handle, drive plate or pad.
- Always return the buffer to an upright position before plugging in and turning the machine on.
- Never leave the buffer unattended.
- To prevent causing damage to walls, furniture and others, control the buffer using both hands.
- Keep the buffering pads clean - this can also help make controlling the machine easier.
- Use extra caution when cleaning under desks, chairs, etc so the machine doesn’t get caught and cause damage.
- When stripping a floor, walk on the area that has already been scrubbed - otherwise the floor may be slippery.

**Cleaning Solutions**
Cleaning solutions used in custodial work contain chemicals that are harmful if splashed in eyes, on skin or inhaled. When these chemicals are not treated with the proper care, they pose a threat to employees and others on campus. Chemicals should always be stored at eye level or below - it is important to know what is in each bottle and what to do in the event of an accident. If you do not know this information, refer to the MSDS or contact your supervisor. Below is more information concerning safe operating procedures while using cleaning chemicals.
- To protective yourself, you should wear personal protective equipment when working with chemicals. This may include safety glasses/goggles and gloves.
- Store all chemicals in an approved and clearly marked container. Containers should also be sealed properly.
- Do not dispose of a chemical unless you know how to properly do so. Be sure to thoroughly rinse out chemical containers before disposing of them.
- If you come across a chemical you are aren’t sure what it is, do not touch it until it can be identified.
- If you smell anything suspicious, clear the area and report the situation to the Safety Office immediately. Do not try to figure out what the smell is on your own.

**Trash Removal**
Most trash should be deposited in the receptacles located in each room of each building. Wastebaskets should be checked and emptied on a daily basis to avoid potential health hazards or lifting hazards.
- Be cautious when taking trash to outside dumpsters. Rain, snow and ice can make these areas slippery.
- Close doors of trash bins after depositing trash.
- Put bags of trash in the proper receptacle (recycling, cardboard, etc.)
• A large number of back injuries in the custodial field can be attributed to improper lifting during trash removal. The larger trash bags should not be packed full—rather they should be retained at a half-full capacity.
• In most cases you will only need to dump the trash can, not fully remove the bag (unless there is food, damage to the bag, or other reason to remove the whole bag.
• If glass was broken and it was deposited in a trash bag, be sure to remove and replace the bag in that trash can. **Be sure to vacuum the area to pick up any remaining pieces of glass.**

**Changing Light Bulbs/Adjusting Clocks**

• Know the tools needed before beginning the job.
• Follow the ‘VCSU SAFE OPERATING PROCEDURES: Ladder Safety’ when the use of a ladder is necessary.
• If assistance is needed when changing a light bulb, contact the Power House.

**Cleaning Stairs**

• Exercise extreme caution while doing any sort of work on stairs.
• Mopping the stairs will cause them to become slick, be aware of these conditions.
• When mopping or sweeping stairs, stand on the one-two stairs below the area being worked on. This will help put less strain on the back and you will be positioned towards the top of the stairs, not looking down.
• Before beginning to mop stairs, be sure to place a “Wet Floor” sign at the top and bottom of the stairs to alert others.

**Elevators**

When entering/exiting an elevator with wheeled cleaning equipment (especially mop buckets) be careful that the wheels don’t catch in the area between the floor and elevator.