

# THE CHOICE IS YOURS: PROTECT YOUR BACK or LAY ON YOUR BACK (Custodians)

**Lifting injuries continue to be the most common injury to custodians.  
Here's a few tips for protecting your valuable back.**

- Try to get into the habit of monitoring the amount of trash that accumulates in 30-50 gallon trash containers—especially around areas where students eat lunch. Don't let the trash cans get more than half full. We would rather spend money on more bags than on doctors, hospitals and physical therapists.
- When emptying trash from a 30-50 gallon container, a vacuum seal might be created when pulling out the trash bag—which makes the bag heavier. If the bag is too heavy to safely lift, lay the trash can on its side and pull the bag out horizontally while keeping a foot on the container.
- When picking small pieces of trash inside a classroom or on the school grounds, always use a “grabber”. If you don't have access to one of these material handlers, request one from your principal or supervisor.
- If an item is too heavy for you to safely lift, ***don't lift it!*** Get help or assistance! Don't try to do it yourself to save time. Only you know how much you can SAFELY lift. Plan ahead for items that you need help lifting. Don't wait until the last minute to try to find someone to help you.
- Don't do all of your lifting at once; break it up throughout the day.

Work-related injuries are a lose-lose situation. You suffer from pain--and money that should go towards educating students is spent on medical care.

**Instructions for SUPERVISOR in presenting this information to your employees:**

1. Ensure all participating employees sign a “Training Attendance Sheet”.
2. Please paraphrase or read verbatim—not simply hand out.
3. Remember to emphasize the importance of working safely.
4. Retain the Training Attendance Sheet in your Safety Program Binder.

**5 - Minute Safety Meeting (March 2009)**