

## 5 Skilled in safety

Purdue's Fire Department is very active learning more rescue skills and educating others about fire safety.

## 6 Rules in research

New national regulations address disclosures of financial stakes in research projects and outcomes.

## 8 Strategic current

Numerous units at Purdue report steps in forming and using strategic plans.

## 13 Wrestling on TV

No, this is the real sport, as the Big Ten Network airs from Purdue and hopes are high for a big fan turnout.

[www.purdue.edu/insidepurdue](http://www.purdue.edu/insidepurdue)

### President's Forum today

President France A. Córdova on the "State of the University." 3 p.m. today (Jan. 29). South Ballroom, Purdue Memorial Union. Open to faculty, staff and students.

## 5 great things to do in February

- Celebrate Valentine's Day through opportunities offered by campus groups or in your own way.
- Get some stimulation: Hear NAACP leader Benjamin Todd Jealous on Feb. 4 or go to Books and Coffee on any Thursday in February.
- Learn new things about Abraham Lincoln at his 200th birthday.
- Cross over into brainy fun with the Crossword Puzzle Contest on Feb. 21 at the West Lafayette Public Library. Solve the entry process at [www.wlaf.lib.in.us](http://www.wlaf.lib.in.us) or 743-2261.
- Cut loose by making plans for a big-name concert at Elliott — Jason Mraz on Feb. 16, Gary Allan and Darius Rucker on Feb. 28, Michael W. Smith and Steven Curtis Chapman on March 29.

Calendar, pages 14-15 or <https://calendar.purdue.edu>

**Every morning,** campus buildings are ready for a day's work.

**Every evening,** crews work hard to make them ready for tomorrow.



# OVERNIGHT SUCCESS

**L**ong after most faculty and staff have gone home, and students have retreated to their residences, over 250 Building Services employees rarely seen by the campus community perform the bulk of their work.

Custodians assigned to the evening and night shifts work somewhat anonymously while providing essential services that often are taken for granted.

In addition to routine cleaning tasks, they also change light

bulbs, handle recycling, assist with snow removal, report anything broken in their buildings, and act as the eyes and ears of the facilities when no other Purdue staff are around.

According to Vivian Scott, Building Services night shift general manager, evening and especially night workers are largely unknown.

"We have a great staff," she says, "but they don't get the face time or personal relationships

with our customers that other Physical Facilities staff receive. They are invisible. It's nice to have fewer distractions while working, but I do miss seeing people."

Bradley Crowder, night utility custodian in Lilly Hall, agrees: "Tenants don't see us. We're 'out of sight, out of mind.'"

Although working after hallways, offices, and classrooms have emptied makes cleaning easier, invisibility comes at a price. For one thing, night workers must reset their body clocks in order to accommodate the

**TOP:** Building Services evening custodial crew Terrin Schieler, Josh Crowder, Rick Shonkwiler and Rigo Huizar strip and wax the main floor of Young Hall in mid-January. **ABOVE:** Evening custodian Tom Burns cleans a classroom, namely Room 202 in the Physics Building. (Photos by Mark Simons)

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## Overnight — Workers keep campus going

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10:30 p.m. to 7 a.m. shift.

One of the biggest difficulties for night shift employees is trying to balance their work schedules with those of their families and the rest of the primarily day-shift world.

“You have to adjust a lot,” Crowder says of the move to working nights. “We don’t eat breakfast when everyone else eats breakfast. We eat pizza when everyone else is eating eggs and bacon.”

Although working nights can mean more freedom for errands and chores during the day, sleep can be elusive. His wife’s recent foot surgery has meant Crowder must do double duty when he goes home, and lately he has been getting just 4-6 hours of sleep per day.

Scott says, “It’s a challenge to balance overnight work hours with sleep and one’s personal life. Most people find it difficult to sleep during the day — you’re fighting your natural body clock. On average, most night shift workers sleep less than other employees. They work very hard, and I appreciate the effort they put forth to strike that balance.”

Evening shift employees don’t deal with the same sleep issues, but shift work still creates conflict with their home lives.

Don Crow, crew chief in the Civil Engineering Building, says, “I have three small children. I miss out on a lot. My daughter plays basketball for Otterbein, so I can’t always see her games. I miss plays and such. I play catch-up on the weekend, but if I don’t schedule vacation time during the week, I miss their activities.”

Mark Needham, evening utility custodian, misses out on seeing Purdue sports and participating in service organizations he used to be involved in.

“I’ve had to put those things off the agenda for now,” he says.

Needham and Crow both appreciate the flexibility their shift affords. Staff may use a few hours of vacation time mid-shift if they need to leave to attend an important event.

“I try to put myself in my employees’ shoes,” evening general manager Don Blackburn says. “This shift is perfect for me now. It wasn’t when I had a son playing high school basketball, though.”

On nights, Scott faces more staff turnover than the other shifts due to the difficulty people have with the hours.

“That’s my biggest challenge managing the night shift,” she says. “Second biggest challenge is interacting with customers who work a different shift.”

Fortunately, she says, customers are “usually great at communicating their needs via email or phone messages.” Most interactions with customers happen via e-mail, and Scott often spends the first part of her shift going through the 50-100 e-mails that accumulate in her inbox over the course of the day.

Building Services recently studied a proposal to adjust the hours of the third shift, but the staff did not want to make the change.

“They take this shift because it does work with their lives,” Scott says.

“The staff is incredibly diverse — people take overnight custodial shifts for all different reasons. We have retired schoolteachers, ex-police officers, people with advanced degrees, people who owned and operated their own businesses. Some stay a short time, some stay a long time. One custodian recently reached his 30-year anniversary — this is what he likes to do.”

Though night workers seldom overlap with regular staff and faculty, evening shift custodians are able to interact with campus customers for the first couple of hours of their shift, which begins at either 3 or 4 p.m.

“The feedback we get from



Carpet specialist Lewis Louderback, a member of the Building Services evening custodial staff, deep-cleans a carpet in a Neil Armstrong Hall classroom on Jan. 15.

PHOTOS BY MARK SIMONS

customers helps us a lot,” Needham says.

Crow says, “We see our customers for an hour or so, then they’re out of our way.”

Despite the challenges they face, second and third shift employees speak positively about their experience.

“Purdue is a wonderful place to work, especially during this trying economy,” Crowder says.

He should know; he is a third-generation Purdue employee. His father, James, worked for 28 years for Residence Halls. His mother, Hattie, also worked for 16 years for Residence Halls. Her father, Woodrow Wilson Sizemore, worked in MSEE during the 1960s. In addition, Crowder’s son Josh now works as a custodian in Young Hall.

Being a part of the Purdue family crosses all shifts. Don Crow on the evening shift has been a custodian for 29 years, and is planning

to stay for 17 more until he reaches retirement age.

Attention to employee needs and an emphasis on open lines of communication have created a positive working environment on the evening shift.

“The morale on this shift is extra high,” Blackburn says. “This is the largest shift [in Building Services]. We have 165 custodians and six supervisors. I tell my staff, ‘We’re a family every day for eight and a half hours.’”

Prudent planning is critical to the custodians’ success.

“We have plans for everything we do, including snowstorms and floods,” Needham says. “It’s like a puzzle — it all just fits together and runs real smooth.”

Blackburn agrees: “Emergencies are rare. What’s an emergency to someone else is routine maintenance to us.”

Building Services is not the only Physical Facilities area that works around the clock. The Purdue Police Department, the Fire Department, and Wade Utility Plant are all staffed 24-7 to ensure the safety and smooth operations of campus facilities. Of Physical Facilities’ 1,350 employees, 21 percent work the evening or night shifts.

— *Special report by Stephanie Boland, communications coordinator, Physical Facilities*

*Other administrative areas of the West Lafayette campus also have employees whose normal shifts are not standard weekday “office hours.” Inside Purdue will look at more of these contributions to the operation of the University in a later issue. To suggest inclusion of such workers in a story or at least a list, contact Dan Howell, managing editor, at [dhowell@purdue.edu](mailto:dhowell@purdue.edu) or 49-42028.*



Brian Clawson, heavy equipment operator in the Grounds department, prepares to sand the drive around Memorial Mall at 6 a.m. Jan. 15. Though Grounds work is mostly daytime, special needs frequently require other hours in difficult conditions.