Housekeeping in the Construction Industry Meeting Kit

Good housekeeping not only results in a cleaner workplace but makes it safer as well. Good housekeeping reduces illnesses and injuries and promotes positive behaviors, habits, and attitudes. Employers are responsible for assessing each workplace before work begins to identify the potential hazards present, and determine ways to eliminate the hazards. An effective housekeeping program is an important element in workplace safety and health management systems.

POOR HOUSEKEEPING PRACTICES CAN RESULT IN:

- Injuries when employees trip over, strike or are struck by out-of-place objects.
- Injuries from using improper tools because the correct tool can’t be found.
- Lowered production because of the time spent maneuvering over and around someone else’s mess and time spent looking for proper tools and materials.
- Lack of future work due to a reputation for poor quality.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING RULES FOR A TIDY CONSTRUCTION SITE

A tidy work area reduces the risk of accidents and improves fire safety. If you don’t have materials, waste and discarded tools lying around all over the place, there are fewer things to trip you up. And if you stop rubbish from piling up, there’s less fuel for a fire, and if one does start, clearer escape routes to get out safely.

Not does good housekeeping improve safety, it will make your work more productive, and could even save you money. Because when a construction site is organised and tidy and everyone knows where everything is, they spend less time looking for things, and more time getting on with things!

Tidying up is one of the jobs that tend to end up last on the list. On construction sites, for example, tidying up tends to be left until the end of the shift. But that just means you're exposing yourself and others to trip hazards all day long – and that's when the accidents will happen.

GOOD HOUSEKEEPING RULES

1. **Designate an area for rubbish and waste.**

Create an area for waste to go. After all, if you want your work area free from waste materials, you need somewhere to put them. This could be a skip or other waste disposal bin depending on the amount of waste. A best practice solution is to segregate waste types for reuse, recycle or landfill.

2. **Stack and store materials safely.**

Poorly stacked materials can block access routes or topple over causing crushing injuries or damage to property. You are going to need materials and tools for use throughout your project, store them safely to stop them from becoming a hazard.

3. **Maintain a safe work area.**

On a construction site, it's likely your job will create waste throughout the day. Whether it's packaging, demolishing, or off-cuts. Check your work area at regular intervals throughout the day and clear up as you go along. If trip hazards and mess is starting to build up, sort it out sooner rather than later.

4. **Keep access routes clear.**

A safe work area includes access and egress. It's how you get to your workplace, and how you leave. Don't leave

materials/tools/benches etc in gangways/corridors where they might impede someone's escape or cause a trip hazard (it might be you or a colleague who needs to get out in a hurry).

5. **Put tools away when you're done.**

If you've finished using tools or equipment, put them away. It's easy to leave items lying around, but if you won't be needing them again in a hurry, put them away. If it's out of use, it should be out of sight, or at least out from under your feet!

6. **Set a tidy example.**

Just because it's not yours, doesn't mean it's not your responsibility. If you see anything lying on floors, stairways, passages that could cause people to trip and fall, pick it up and put it in a safe place – don't wait for someone else to move it, the next person might be the one who gets hurt.

7. **If it is broken, fix it.**

Fix it, or ditch it. Good housekeeping is also about keeping things in good working order on site. Damaged tools or equipment must be taken out of use so that can either be repaired or replaced.

8. **Don't let cables trip you up.**

Trailing leads and cables from equipment are common trip hazards, particularly when using portable equipment. You may not have a socket close the working area, but make sure you route the lead away from walkways or access routes. Route cables where they do not cause a trip hazard to you or others.

9. **Avoid fire risks.**

Make sure waste or the storage of materials does not build up in fire escapes as you may need to use these escapes at some point. Clearing up and removing waste is also a good way to prevent fires on site. Fire needs fuel, so don't allow waste materials to be stored close to sources of ignition. If all rubbish is regularly collected and put into the skip, in the event of the fire, the

danger is confined and more easily dealt with.

Poor housekeeping may result in employee injuries or even death, citations by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) (or another regulatory agency) and even difficulty in securing future work. How can such a seemingly “minor” issue such as housekeeping have such serious consequences?

FINAL WORD

Paying attention to the small details translates to bigger changes in the safety culture in the field. Not only does good housekeeping help to lower property loss incidents as well as injuries, but it also shows the maturity of a safety culture within a company. Many of us work for a larger contractor or client in the construction industry and when your work areas are always clean and tidy it shows responsibility of your company to address the small issues onsite.