Housekeeping Isn’t a Dirty Word

Safety Talk

What’s at Stake?

Poor housekeeping is one of the leading causes of nonfatal occupational injuries. According to the National Safety Council, 15% of all accidental deaths at work are caused by slips, trips, and falls. Many of which can be linked to shoddy housekeeping.

What’s the Danger?

- What can happen to the work environment when you don’t practice good housekeeping?
- Not containing and cleaning up combustible dust is a huge risk for explosion.
- Improper storage of flammable and combustible liquids is also a fire or explosion risk.
- Not properly stacking and storing items is a falling objects risk that can lead to injury or death, and damage to products and equipment.
- Cluttered aisles and passageways:
    - Increase the chance of slip, trip, fall injuries.
    - Blocks escape in an emergency; and
    - Blocks emergency equipment like fire extinguishers.
- A messy space can hide health hazards, chemical leaks, and fire hazards.
- Finally, poor housekeeping can lead to pest or rodent infestation.

What can happen to you when you don’t practice good housekeeping? You may:

- Trip over loose items on floors, stairs and platforms or slip on greasy, wet or dirty surfaces.
- Strike or run into projecting, poorly stacked items or misplaced material, or be hit by falling objects.

- Cut, puncture or tear skin on projecting nails, wire or steel strapping; and finally,
- Have a hard time finding tools, paperwork, and other items needed to do your job or find it hard to concentrate in a messy environment. This can make you less productive and motivated.

How to Protect Yourself

- Keep your work area, organized, clean, and orderly.
- Mark aisles and passageways in the warehouse, shop and manufacturing floor, and have a clear designation for vehicle and pedestrian traffic as well as pallet storage, equipment storage. If this is missing in your workplace, speak to your supervisor about it.
- Label what goes where and put things away after use. This includes tools, chemicals, and PPE.
- Follow procedures for disposing of trash regularly and properly. For example, use metal cans with lid for disposal containers for oily rags, or put recycling in the correct bin and not in the regular trash.
- Store flammable and combustible liquids such as paint, paint thinners, solvents etc. in their designated storage cabinets.
- Make sure racks in the warehouse are secured for safe storage of inventory, equipment, and tools. If not, notify your supervisor.
- Keep aisles and passageways clear:
    - Never store anything in or around doorways or stairways.
    - Always close drawers and cabinet doors when not in use; and
    - Never run loose cords or hoses across walkways.

Final Word

Effective housekeeping results in the easier flow of materials, less exposure to hazardous substances, more efficient cleanup and maintenance and a safer workplace for everyone.