Housekeeping on Construction Sites Meeting Kit

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Although, the overall safety of a construction site is the ultimate responsibility of the general contractor who maintains the site safety plan and communicates its information to all of the subcontractors on site, every worker on the site is responsible for safety. It's every worker's responsibility to know and following the site safety plan, practice good housekeeping, follow recommended work practices, and promptly report and/or correct hazards at the worksite.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

TYPES OF HAZARDS RESULTING FROM POOR HOUSEKEEPING IN CONSTRUCTION

1. **Slip, trip, and fall hazards**– One of the most common type of hazards created by poor housekeeping are slip, trip, and fall hazards. When objects, materials, tools, and equipment are not properly stored workers are bound to trip over them. Slippery conditions are created when water, moisture, oils, grease, etc. are left on the floor in work areas. Fall hazards are created when employees have to stand on makeshift surfaces to reach items stored at higher levels. Falls also occur when changes in elevation are not properly marked or barricaded in work areas.
2. **Strain and sprain hazards-** Sprain and strain injuries can result from slip, trip, and fall incidents. They also can occur when heavy items are not properly put away. Too often items have to be moved when there is poor housekeeping in a work area just for the sake of getting them out of the way. Because of unnecessary lifting, sprains and strains can occur.
3. **Laceration hazards-** When working on a construction site,

there are plenty of sharp objects that can cut your hand or body. When items are not properly stored this creates a huge risk for laceration injuries. Sharp tools, jagged metal, sharp edged material, etc. can all easily cut through a glove or clothing and injure a worker.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

SLIP, TRIP AND FALL PREVENTION PROTOCOL ON CONSTRUCTION SITES

- If you have an accident or a near miss, make sure you report it promptly.
- If you see a spillage, clean it up or make arrangements for it to be cleaned.
- If you see items where someone could trip over them, remove them or arrange for them to be removed or for the situation to be made safe.
- If you are given PPE, wear it and look after it.
- Tell your employer about any work situation that you think is dangerous, or if you notice that something has gone wrong with their health and safety arrangements.

BEST HOUSEKEEPING SAFETY PRACTICES ON CONSTRUCTION SITES

1. **Designate An Area for Rubbish and Waste.** Create an area for waste to go. 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.
3. **Maintain A Safe Work Area.** 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.

5. **Prevent Falling Objects.** Protections such as a toe board, toe rail or net can help prevent objects from falling and hitting workers or equipment. Other tips include stacking boxes and materials straight up and down to keep them from falling. Place heavy objects on lower shelves and keep equipment away from the edges of desks and tables.
6. **Maintenance**. Maintenance involves keeping buildings, equipment, and machinery in safe, efficient working order and in good repair.
7. **Employee Facilities.** Employee facilities need to be adequate, clean, and well maintained. Washroom facilities require cleaning once or more each shift. They also need to have a good supply of soap, towels, and disinfectants.
8. **Put Tools Away When 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.
9. **Set A Tidy Example – Clear Clutter.** If you see anything lying on floors, stairways, or 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. Keep aisles, stairways, emergency exits, electrical panels, and doors clear of clutter, and purge untidy areas.
10. **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.
11. **Don't let cables trip you up.** Trailing leads and cables from equipment are common trip hazards, particularly when using portable equipment. Route cables where they do not cause a trip hazard to you or others.
12. **Avoid fire risks.** 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.

13. **Make others aware.** Get everyone practicing the same good housekeeping routines and you will be on your way to a tidy, and safe site, for everyone.
14. **Determine frequency.** How much debris or contaminants the workplace releases can help determine the frequency of housekeeping. A company should have a mixture of deep cleaning and more frequent, lighter cleaning that involves sweeping and responding to spills.
15. **Create written rules.** Written protocols could specify which cleaners, tools and methods should be used, as they are then formal and defined.
16. **Think long-term.** Housekeeping should be more than a one-time initiative – it should continue through monitoring and auditing. Keep records, maintain a regular walk-through inspection schedule, report hazards and train employees to help sustain housekeeping. Set goals and expectations, and base auditing on those goals.

FINAL WORD

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