Housekeeping’s Role in Safe Workplaces

What’s at Stake?

What does housekeeping have to do with safety? Lots! A clean and orderly workplace is essential to avoid falls, fires and many other kinds of accidents and injuries.

What’s the Danger?

Whether it’s an office, warehouse, workshop or construction site, there are serious reasons for not trying to function in a messy work environment.

Here are some examples:

- Injury or death resulting from a trip or fall.
- Injury or death after being struck by an out-of-place object.
- Injury or death in a fire caused by improper storage or disposal of combustible materials.
- Reduced productivity because of time spent getting around or over someone else’s clutter and looking for proper tools and materials.
- Lack of future work due to a reputation for poor quality and practices.

How to Protect Yourself

Sometimes housekeeping practices are established after a brush with disaster; cleanup seems much more important after a fall or a fire resulting from poor housekeeping. But it should not have to take a close call or an injury before housekeeping becomes a priority. Here are 13 housekeeping reminders that you can easily follow every day.

1. Keep your work area clean, free of clutter, and arranged properly. This means cleaning up spills and leaks quickly and properly too.

2. Dispose of oily rags only in covered metal cans.
3. Keep your tools and equipment clean and well maintained.
4. Report and place out of service any damaged tools and equipment.
5. Inspect electrical cables, cords, plugs and outlets regularly for wear and damage.
6. Keep drawers and cabinet doors closed to prevent tripping hazards.
7. Do your part to keep aisles, exits and entrances are free of obstructions, such as electrical cables, hoses, chairs, and stored materials.
8. Store materials in approved, clearly labeled containers in designated storage areas and remember to stack materials securely so they don’t fall.
9. Never block sprinklers, fire alarms and fire extinguishers.
10. Only smoke in designated areas and use the ashtrays provided.
11. Clean up after yourself in the breakroom. Don’t leave trash on the tables, clean your dishes, and remove your old food from the refrigerator at least weekly.
12. Same thing goes in the washrooms too – help keep them clean and dry.
13. Report safety hazards and housekeeping concerns immediately.

Final Word

Good housekeeping is not a special activity for when visitors are coming. It’s a way of life for a safe workplace. Take responsibility for workplace housekeeping and do your part to help protect yourself and your co-workers from fires, falls and other serious incidents.