How to Clean Up at Work

WHAT'S AT STAKE?

Workplace housekeeping has been an important part of job safety programs for many years. Whether you are working in a traditional factory or a 21st century work setting such as a wind energy tower, good housekeeping can be a life-saver.

WHAT'S THE DANGER?

A messy or untidy workplace can lead to serious injuries and fatalities. You can slip on spills, bump into objects placed in the wrong location or be injured by something falling on you. Fires can start in piles of paper or scrap.

This is why it is important to practice good worksite housekeeping. You may think it is more important to do your work than to clean it up. However, by practicing regular daily maintenance, your job will not only be easier but safer.

EXAMPLE

Scrap discarded on a scaffold could trip a worker and cause a fatal fall. Grease spilled on a kitchen floor could cause a worker to slip and contact a fryer filled with hot oil.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

- Clean up anything that spills, even water, to prevent slips and other incidents.
- Put everything back where it belongs when you are finished with it. Out-of-place tools and other objects are not only hard to find, but can cause serious incidents.
- Keep your workplace free of dust, dirt, and debris. Dirt can contaminate work and spread disease. Dust can get in your lungs. Some forms of dust and debris can lead to fires.

- Dispose of scrap and other rubbish immediately and in proper containers. Be particularly careful about getting rid of oily rags – in approved containers only – and papers, wood and other combustible materials.
- All passageways, including halls, doorways and stairwells should be kept clear. If there is an emergency, the route to safety must not be blocked. Don’t forget electrical and other cords in aisles; they can trip you up.
- Items must be stacked properly. Racks, bins and storage areas should not be overloaded or they may topple. Other objects should be securely placed so they do not fall.
- All access must be clear to emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers, control switches, safety showers, eyewash stations and first aid boxes.
- All hazardous substances should be properly stored in well-ventilated areas with labeled containers.
- Lightbulbs and lighting tubes should be replaced regularly and lighting systems must be working. Inadequate lighting causes many injuries.
- Keep all tools and equipment in good repair. When you see something needing special maintenance or repair, report it immediately.
- Don’t forget to clean up after yourself in the lunchroom. Throw away your lunch bags, other food wrappers and wasted food. Rinse your dishes, utensils and clean the counters if you spill something.

FINAL WORD

Keeping your workplace clean and tidy has many positive effects. It is worth the time and effort. If you clean up as work, you will find it will not slow down your productivity. You will find you have little cleaning to do when you are finished. A clean and tidy workplace is likely to be a safe and productive one.