Organization of Work Areas Meeting Kit

WORK AREAS BEST PRACTICES

Our work areas are setup and not changed for long periods of time, even when a rearrangement would be a great improvement. Complacency often plays a factor in why our work areas are not changed for the better. Taking the time to evaluate your work areas as well as taking action to eliminate hazards can prevent an injury from occurring.

Often times much of our focus is given to the hazards of a work task, but less focus is given to the hazards poor work area conditions create. Work areas that are chaotic and that have poor organization can lead to more injuries and property damage incidents.

HAZARDS CREATED BY POOR ORGANIZATION OF WORK AREAS

Some hazards of poorly organized work areas include:

- **Sprain/ Strain hazards-** Poor foresight or carelessness often leads to heavy or awkward objects being left on the floor or in a space that makes it difficult for someone to lift them up. These situations put individuals at risk for sprain and strain injuries which are some of the most common and costly injuries that occur in the workplace.
- **Overhead hazards-** Poor organization leads to objects being hastily thrown on overhead shelves which leads to dropped object hazards as well as a struck-by hazard for someone working in the area.
- **Risks to property**– When items are left everywhere or in the line of fire, damage to tools, equipment, or materials often occurs.

Struck-by incidents- Work areas that do not have any designated paths for personnel walking through or areas blocked off for specific work tasks such as grinding, create struck-by hazards can

be particularly dangerous. Flying debris, lifting loads, and moving objects can all create struck-by hazards for anyone in the area.

Slips, trips, and falls- Objects on the ground due to poor organization or housekeeping create trip hazards for any walking through that area. Slippery surfaces due to moisture or other liquids such as oil can cause a slip or a fall. Uneven surfaces, steps, or unexpected drop-offs are also a common trip hazards in poorly designed work areas.

Caught in or between incidents– Work areas that place people near moving parts or equipment is also a huge concern. Moving equipment such as belts or fans can grab a hold of a person's clothing or hair pulling them into the moving parts.

BEST PRACTICES FOR WORK AREA ORGANIZATION

- Delineate walking paths from actual work areas. Consider when physical barriers such as a fence or wall are needed to protect people from a hazardous work process.
- Organize all tools, equipment, materials, etc. in an area. Everything should have its own place that does not pose a hazard to anyone in that area.
- Always guard moving parts and equipment even when they are not in the immediate planned walking path. If people can fit into an area and the moving parts are not physically blocked off there is a chance of a caught in or between injury.
- Keep walking and working surfaces kept up and safe. Mark any elevation changes with bright fluorescent paint. Patch any holes or major cracks to prevent trip hazards. Always strive to keep dry clean floors. Consider applying some type of grit or material that improves traction in areas where moisture can occur.

MORE BEST PRACTICES FOR EMPLOYEES TO STAY ORGANIZED AT WORK

You have heard the saying, "A cluttered desk is a sign of a cluttered mind?" A workspace decently organized can leave more time for productivity. However, somewhere between meetings,

conference calls and client work… things can quickly get out of hand. The important thing is to strive to stay organized, because it really can make a difference – in fact, the average office employee spends 1.5 hours a day just looking for things. That's almost six weeks per year!

Make time to organize. Although you don't have to make organizing your top priority for the day, it is important to at least make time for it. Set aside at least 30 minutes each week to get your desk, computer and even your thoughts in order. Try to spend time at the end of each workday organizing your desk before you leave. This will make the following day much easier, as you will already know where everything is. It's a good idea to spend time at least one day a week organizing your computer to make sure that everything is in its proper folder. We know that there can be times when you are in a rush and you have to save something to the desktop. Having appropriate folders in your computer can really come in handy when you are quickly trying to locate a particular document. It's also a good idea to start your workday off by regrouping and recalling all of your assigned daily responsibilities and tasks. This will help organize your mind for a productive start to your day while keeping you focused.

Establish a filing system. Filing cabinets or computer folders? In this case, it really doesn't matter because both have the potential to be organized. Most importantly, be consistent with your system. Establish a filing system and stick with it. If you prefer to keep hard copies all of your documents in folders or in a filing cabinet, spend the time establishing a proper place for each type of document. Make various folders or use different drawers to distinguish between different types of work. On the other hand, if you prefer to keep track of everything online or on your computer, make sure you have a backup system to save your work in case something terrible happens.

Label Everything. Labeling is always a key factor to organization because it helps you stay consistent with your work. When you properly label everything, your organization process runs smoothly and cohesively. It helps keep everything in its proper place and

ensures that you (hopefully) won’t misplace or lose track of something.

Don’t forget to breathe. No one is perfect and we don’t expect you to become an organized genius overnight. If you find that the process of trying to stay organized is stressing you out, then take a break and breathe. Although organization might be a key to success, it is not the only factor. Just remember that it really can make a big difference in your work life. Find the time and the method that works best for you and stick with it.

FINAL WORD

Take time to evaluate your work areas today. How long have they been organized in their current state? Is there a better way to setup a certain area? Were they better organized at one time and now they are not up to par? Think about how rearranging certain things can lead to fewer hazards as well as create a more pleasant place to work in general.