

TerranearPMC Safety Share

Week of March 7, 2016– Housekeeping

*(The following is an edited excerpt from The National Safety Council's Magazine, Safety & Health
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To some people, the word “housekeeping” calls to mind cleaning floors and surfaces, removing dust, and organizing clutter. However, housekeeping extends from traditional offices and homes to industrial workplaces, including factories, warehouses and manufacturing plants where conditions such as hazardous materials, combustible dust and flammables may be present. Experts agree that all workplace safety programs should incorporate housekeeping, and every employee needs to play a part, including a commitment from management so workers realize its importance. Here are some important steps for effective workplace housekeeping.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, **Slips, trips and falls** were the second leading cause of nonfatal occupational injuries involving days away from work in 2013. These types of incidents are predominantly due to poor housekeeping.

OSHA's Walking-Working Surfaces Standard (1910.22(a)) states that all workplaces should be “kept clean and orderly and in a sanitary condition.” The rule includes passageways, storerooms and service rooms. Floors should be clean and dry. Drainage should be present where wet processes are used. The Canadian Center for Occupational Health and Safety has established a set of protocols to help prevent slip, trip and fall incidents. These are:

- Report and clean up spills and leaks.
- Keep aisles and exits clear of items.
- Consider installing mirrors and warning signs to help with blind spots.
- Replace worn, ripped or damaged flooring.
- Consider installing anti-slip flooring in areas that can't always be cleaned.
- Use drip pans and guards.

In addition, OSHA recognizes the importance of providing mats, platforms, false floors or other dry standing places. Of course all workplaces need to be free of projecting nails, splinters, holes and loose boards.

Housekeeping also means the elimination of fire hazards. This means removing unnecessary combustible materials from accumulating in the work area. According to OSHA's Hazardous Materials Standard (1910.106), combustible waste should be “stored in covered metal receptacles and disposed of daily.”

The National Safety Council “Supervisors' Safety Manual” includes these precautionary measures for fire safety:

- Keep combustible materials in the work area only in amounts needed for the job. When they are unneeded, move them to an assigned safe storage area.



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- Store quick-burning, flammable materials in designated locations away from ignition sources.
- Avoid contaminating clothes with flammable liquids. Change clothes if contamination occurs.
- Keep passageways and fire doors free of obstructions. Stairwell doors should be kept closed. Do not store items in stairwells.
- Keep materials at least 18 inches away from automatic sprinklers, fire extinguishers and sprinkler controls. The 18-inch distance is required, but 24 to 36 inches is recommended. Clearance of 3 feet is required between piled material and the ceiling. If stock is piled more than 15 feet high, clearance should be doubled. Check applicable codes, including Life Safety Code, ANSI/NFPA 101-2009.
- Hazards in electrical areas should be reported, and work orders should be issued to fix them.

Avoid tracking materials into the work area. Work-area mats – which can be cloth or sticky-topped – should be kept clean. This helps prevent the spread of hazardous materials to other work areas as well as being transferred to the homes of workers. Also, check all mats to ensure they are not tripping hazards.

Cleaning protocols may be different for different areas to prevent cross-contamination. This may mean to avoid using the same mop to clean both an oily spill and in another area. If the materials are toxic, industrial hygiene testing, plus the use of work uniforms and showering facilities need to be considered. Employees who work with toxic materials should not wear their work clothes home.

Clear clutter! A cluttered workplace can lead to ergonomics issues and possible injuries because workers have less space to move. When an area is cluttered, there is an increased risk for a cut or laceration injury as well as body sprains and strains. This is due to the fact that there is a lack of room to set up workstations where personnel can move without contacting equipment and materials. This can also cause an ergonomic concern due to repetitive body motion due to twisting rather than moving the whole body.

Clearing clutter also means returning tools and other materials to storage after using them, and dispose of materials that are no longer needed. Keep aisles, stairways, emergency exits, electrical panels and doors clear of clutter, and purge untidy areas. Empty trash receptacles before they overflow.

Prevent falling objects: Protections such as toe boards, toe rails or nets can help prevent objects from falling and hitting workers or equipment. Boxes and other materials need to be stacked straight up and down to keep them from falling. Heavy objects should be placed on lower shelves, while keeping equipment away from the edges of desks and tables. Also, objects in areas where workers walk should not be stacked high causing potential fall hazards as they walk through areas.

Bottom line: Housekeeping should be more than a one-time initiative. It should be a continuous process, observed and practiced daily.

The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them. Ernest Hemingway

