

PRACTICING GOOD HOUSEKEEPING

Good housekeeping goes beyond neatness and cleanliness. It can help prevent accidents. Most workplace slip, trip, and fall injuries are directly related to poor housekeeping, which can also cause other workplace injuries, such as “struck by” or “struck against.” OSHA requires that “all places of employment...shall be kept clean and orderly and in sanitary condition.”

Housekeeping includes keeping all work areas orderly, maintaining walkways/floors free of obstructions and eliminating slip and trip hazards, as well as “struck by” hazards such as poorly stacked items.

Good housekeeping practices can also help prevent fires. Regular removal of excess flammable materials should be a routine housekeeping safety practice. Keeping walkways, stairways, and exit doors free of obstacles helps employees evacuate the workplace quickly and safely in the event of an emergency – this is another OSHA requirement.



COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE HOUSEKEEPING PROGRAM

- **Dust and dirt removal** – Adequate vacuum and exhaust systems help remove dusts, including sawdust, and other airborne particulates. Industrial vacuums with specialized fittings for cleaning walls, ceilings, machinery, and other hard-to-reach places should be used in those areas where dust and dirt accumulate. Dampening floors before sweeping also reduces dust dispersal. Manual cleaning of light fixtures, windows, shelving, etc. is needed to remove dust and grime.
- **Employee facilities** – Washrooms and lockers must be kept clean, sanitary and be well maintained. They should also have an adequate supply of soap and towels.
- **Floor surfaces** – Poor floor conditions, such as slippery surfaces and broken tiles, are a major cause of falls. Control these hazards with anti-slip mats near entranceways and in areas with wet operations; replacing cracked floor tiles and ripped carpeting can also help prevent injuries.
- **Spill containment** – The best way to control spills is to stop them before they happen. Frequent cleaning and maintaining of machinery, and using drip pans and containment tanks where spills occur, helps prevent falls. When spills take place, it is important to clean them up quickly, and place appropriate warning signs to alert other employees. Use appropriate materials for cleaning up greasy and oily spills.

- **Aisles and stairways** – Aisles need to be wide enough to allow for the movement of people, products, materials and lifting aids. They must be kept clear, and not used for storage – even temporarily. Stairways and aisles also require adequate lighting.
- **Storage** – Good organization of stored materials and equipment not only leads to fewer incidents, it results in better control of tools and material. Tools require appropriate fixtures with marked locations to provide orderly arrangement. Materials should be placed in their designated storage areas, away from work areas and walkways. Storage should never block fire equipment, emergency eyewash facilities or first-aid stations.

Flammables, combustibles, and other hazardous materials must be stored in approved containers in designated areas, specific to the hazards they pose. Clearly mark these areas.

- **Stacking of materials** – Cartons and drums should be stacked on a firm foundation and properly secured. Materials should not be stacked too high. Pallets should be stored flat.
- **Maintenance** – Broken windows, damaged doors, plumbing issues, and cracked floors makes a workplace look neglected and result in accidents. Sanitary facilities, machinery and equipment must be kept safe and in good repair. Implement an effective maintenance program with a set schedule for inspecting, maintaining, and repairing workplace facilities, tools, and equipment.
- **Waste disposal** – Refuse and scrap not only cause falls and fires, but can lead to a buildup of vermin. Refuse collection should be done throughout the workday. Adequate numbers of scrap containers should be placed near work areas. Waste such as chemicals and flammables must be placed in appropriate containers.

IMPLEMENT SAFE WORK PRACTICES

- Every employee takes responsibility for workplace housekeeping.
- Work stations are kept clean, free of clutter and arranged properly.
- Spills and leaks of any variety are cleaned up quickly and appropriately.
- Floors are clean, dry, and in good condition.
- Proper waste containers are located in close proximity to work areas and emptied regularly.
- Aisles, exits, and entrances are free of obstructions.
- Adequate lighting throughout the workplace.
- Materials are stacked appropriately so they cannot topple onto employees.
- Lunch areas, washrooms, lockers, and other workplace facilities are well maintained.
- Fire and emergency equipment are not obstructed and regularly inspected.