

Worksite Housekeeping to Prevent Injuries



Good housekeeping is one of the simplest and most effective ways employers can reduce workplace injuries. While housekeeping is sometimes viewed as a routine maintenance task, a clean, organized workplace can help prevent slips, trips, falls, struck-by incidents, fires, equipment damage and other hazards. Poor housekeeping can quickly turn ordinary workplace activities into serious safety risks.

For OHS managers and employers, housekeeping should be treated as an ongoing safety responsibility rather than something that happens only at the end of a shift. Every employee should understand their role in keeping work areas clean, organized and free from unnecessary hazards. Establishing clear expectations, assigning daily responsibilities and conducting regular inspections can help make good housekeeping part of the workplace safety culture.

Common Injuries Prevented by Good Housekeeping

Many workplace injuries have a direct connection to poor housekeeping. Slips and falls can occur when floors, walkways or stairs are contaminated with water, oil, grease, chemicals or other materials. Trips can result from cords, hoses, tools, boxes, debris or materials left in walkways.

Poor organization can also contribute to struck-by and falling-object injuries. Materials stacked improperly may shift or fall, while tools and equipment left in inappropriate locations can create hazards for employees and visitors. Clutter can also restrict access to emergency exits, fire extinguishers, electrical panels and first-aid equipment.

Housekeeping is particularly important in workplaces where combustible materials, chemicals, dust or waste are present. Accumulated waste and debris can increase fire risks and may also create additional exposure to hazardous substances, pests or biological hazards.

Worksite Housekeeping Best Practices

Employers should establish clear housekeeping standards that identify what must be cleaned, how often it must be completed and who is responsible. Expectations should apply to production areas, offices, storage spaces, lunchrooms, washrooms, parking areas, loading areas and other workplace locations.

Employees should clean up spills and debris as soon as they are identified rather than leaving hazards for another worker. Tools, equipment and materials should be returned to designated storage areas after use. Walkways, aisles and emergency access routes should remain unobstructed, and storage areas should be organized so that materials can be safely accessed without creating falling or collapsing hazards.

Employers should also provide the equipment and supplies employees need to maintain good housekeeping. This may include appropriate waste containers, spill kits, brooms, dustpans, absorbent materials, cleaning products and storage systems. Employees should receive training on how to use these

materials safely, particularly when cleaning spills involving hazardous substances.

Daily Housekeeping Checklist

OHS managers and supervisors can use the following checklist as part of daily workplace inspections:

- Floors, stairs, and walkways are clean and free of slip and trip hazards.
- Spills are cleaned up promptly and appropriate warning signs are used when necessary.
- Tools, equipment, and materials are stored in designated locations.
- Aisles, corridors, and emergency exits remain unobstructed.
- Fire extinguishers, emergency equipment, and electrical panels are accessible.
- Cords, hoses, and cables are secured and do not create trip hazards.
- Waste and scrap materials are removed regularly.
- Workstations are organized and free of unnecessary clutter.
- Materials are stacked securely and safely.
- Shelves and storage areas are not overloaded.
- Chemicals and hazardous materials are properly stored and labelled.
- Outdoor areas are free of debris and other hazards.
- Lighting is sufficient to identify housekeeping hazards.
- Cleaning supplies and spill-response equipment are available.
- Employees are reporting housekeeping hazards when they are identified.

Building a Housekeeping Safety Culture

Effective housekeeping requires more than assigning someone to clean at the end of the day. Employers should establish clear responsibilities for employees, supervisors and management. Supervisors should routinely inspect work areas and address recurring problems rather than simply correcting individual hazards.

Employers can also use workplace inspections and incident investigations to identify housekeeping trends. If employees repeatedly leave materials in the same location or spills frequently occur in a particular area, the underlying process should be reviewed. Sometimes the solution may involve better storage, additional equipment, improved workflow or changes to the work area itself.

Employees should be encouraged to report hazards without fear of blame or discipline. Recognizing employees and teams that consistently maintain safe work areas can also reinforce positive housekeeping behaviours.

Good Housekeeping is Workplace Injury Prevention

Effective housekeeping is an important component of workplace injury prevention. Keeping floors, walkways, workstations and storage areas clean and organized can eliminate or reduce numerous hazards before they result in an incident. For employers and OHS managers, the goal should be to make housekeeping an everyday responsibility that is incorporated into work procedures, inspections and workplace culture.

A safe workplace is not simply one that is cleaned periodically. It is a workplace where employees understand

that maintaining a clean, organized and hazard-free environment is part of doing the job safely.