



## **To The Point About: Good Housekeeping**

Our workplace is full of hazards, hazards that can hurt us or kill us. Controlling these hazards and preventing injuries is the point of your safety and health program. One such hazard is the one presented by poor housekeeping that can contribute to a workplace fire, a trip, a slip or be the cause of other injuries. Following good housekeeping practices can prevent injuries and save lives. Practicing these good housekeeping procedures should be an integral part of your job responsibilities.

### **MAINTAINING A TIDY & WELL-ORGANIZED WORK AREA**

- A cluttered work area has many negative effects. Not only is it a fire and fall hazard, it can also adversely affect your productivity and your state of mind.
- An unorganized and messy work area often leads to a worker getting behind in his or her work. Getting behind often leads to rushing and frustration, which can quickly cascade into a domino effect of unsafe acts and conditions, resulting in injury.
- Don't store items on stairs, in aisle ways or in front of exits, even for just a short time.
- Also, make sure areas in front of emergency equipment such as fire extinguishers, eyewash stations and safety showers are not blocked. These types of emergency equipment must always be readily accessible.
- Tools should be returned to their proper storage location after each use so they can be easily found again when needed and so they won't clutter your work area.
- Messy or cluttered work areas are a major factor in many slips, trip and fall injuries. Falls are the second leading cause of workplace fatalities and the third most common cause of disabling employee injuries. This is just one reason that good housekeeping is so important to preventing injuries.

### **TRIPPING HAZARDS**

- If you discover a tripping hazard, correct the situation if you are able and can do so safely; otherwise, mark the hazard to alert others and follow our organization's protocol for having it corrected.
- Tripping hazards come in many forms, including cords and hoses draped across walkways, work materials and tools obstructing aisles and work areas and open file cabinet drawers. Following good housekeeping procedures can prevent such items from becoming trip hazards.
- Secure cords properly either by marking them as a hazard or taping them to the floor. Remember that cords should only cross walkways and aisles temporarily and should be removed as soon as they are no longer needed.



- Travel areas should also not be used for storage. As items that are stored there can easily become tripping hazards.
- Be aware that stacked materials such as pallets, boards and poles can shift and move during your work. Make sure to correct any problems that you notice so they don't become tripping hazards.

#### SLIPPING HAZARDS

- Another essential component of good housekeeping is looking for and correcting slipping hazards. Many workplace injuries occur when slippery conditions go unnoticed or ignored.
- If you notice a spill of a non-hazardous liquid, make sure to mark it with a sign or barrier and then take the appropriate steps to have it cleaned up. Be aware that many substances are considered hazardous and require special clean up procedures by an emergency response team. If you see a spill of a hazardous chemical, follow our organization's policies for proper clean up and disposal.
- Remember, the best thing you can do when you discover a slip or trip hazard in our workplace is to take action to resolve it. Make it a point to either correct the situation yourself or report it to the proper authority so it can be remedied.

#### FIRE PREVENTION

- Preventing slips, trips and falls is one of the main points of our good housekeeping program, but it is only one point. Another major point of maintaining a tidy, organized workplace is fire prevention.
- Only keep the amount of work materials needed for your shift in your work area. Having an excessive supply of materials on hand can contribute to a small fire becoming a large one.
- Another way to reduce the risk of fire is to make sure equipment is kept properly maintained and tools and supplies are kept organized for your entire workday.
- Don't allow large quantities of discarded materials and equipment to become a dumping site for other waste. The point is that the larger such piles are allowed to grow, the greater the fire hazard they become.
- Flammable substances should be stored in flame-proof, well-ventilated storage cabinets when not in use.
- As with other work materials, only keep the amount of a flammable liquid required for the task at hand in your workstation.



- Consult Section 7 of the Safety Data Sheet for a chemical if you have any questions about its storage and handling procedures and refer to Section 5 for firefighting measures.

#### GOOD HOUSEKEEPING IN OFFICE ENVIRONMENTS

- Good housekeeping isn't just important in industrial environments. It's also essential in the office as well.
- Keep in mind that untidy work areas tend to grow with papers and other flammable items behind, underneath and around desks, becoming fire hazards. Never allow such hazards to accumulate near heat sources such as space heaters, power strips and other electrical equipment.
- Don't allow paper, boxes or other office supplies to block stairways, exits and doorways. This creates major issues in the event of an emergency.
- Also, never allow access to fire alarms, fire extinguishers or other emergency equipment to be blocked by stored materials, furniture or other items.
- Remember that file cabinet drawers are a tripping hazard that contributes to many trip and fall injuries. Make sure to close any drawers once you have finished inserting or removing documents from them.