

# Accident Reduction through Good Housekeeping

Housekeeping is not just about cleanliness. It includes keeping work areas neat and orderly and keeping aisles, floors and stairs free from slip and trip hazards. The removal of waste (paper, cardboard, containers and used chemicals) from the work area is valuable in reducing accidents. Housekeeping requires focusing attention on important details in the workplace such as layout, aisle markings, adequacy of storage facilities and maintenance. Maintaining "order" throughout the day requires a great deal of planning and management.

Experience has shown that good housekeeping is an essential and effective part of a safety and health program. Effective housekeeping helps eliminate workplace hazards and promotes a safer, more efficient work environment. Poor housekeeping can contribute to accidents by hiding hazards that cause injuries.

Effective housekeeping at work benefits all employees in the District. Effective housekeeping results in:

- Fewer accidents by creating an orderly, clutter-free, spill-free work environment
- Decreased fire hazards
- Reduced exposure to hazardous substances
- Improved control of tools and materials
- Better hygienic conditions leading to improved health
- More effective use of space
- Less janitorial work
- Improved morale

## Good Housekeeping

Good housekeeping ensures that work areas are not used for storage; materials required on a day-to-day basis are kept at a minimum and stored correctly. Insufficient storage results in materials being used, handled and stored in hazardous and dangerous ways. For effective housekeeping, everyone should understand the use and movement of materials through the District as well as the proper use of materials and products that are used on a day-to-day basis.

Housekeeping responsibilities should be included in all job tasks, helping the District maintain an orderly and neat appearance. Reorganizing, cleaning up and removing clutter should be done immediately. Effective housekeeping includes the following:

- Cleaning up during the shift
- Day to day cleanup
- Waste disposal
- Removal of unused materials
- Inspection to ensure that cleanup is complete.

It is easy to forget about the out-of-the-way places such as shelves, basements, sheds, boiler rooms, electrical/mechanical rooms and under stairs. Remember to include these areas in your housekeeping tasks. Maintaining a neat and orderly arrangement of tools, equipment and supplies will help to make this possible.

## Dust and Dirt Removal

Vacuum or wet sweep dusty areas frequently. A dampened floor or use of a sweeping compound prior to sweeping will reduce the amount of airborne dust an employee might inhale. These techniques will help reduce respiratory type irritations. If dust and dirt are allowed to accumulate on floor surfaces, there is a potential for a slip hazard.

Compressed air should not be used for removing dust or dirt off employees or equipment. Compressed air can cause dirt and dust particles to be embedded under the skin, in the eye or in the bloodstream.

## Flooring

Floors should be cleaned regularly and immediately if liquids or other materials are spilled. Poor floor conditions are a leading cause of accidents in the workplace. Areas such as entranceways that cannot be cleaned continuously should have mats or some type of anti-slip flooring. It is also important to replace worn, ripped or damaged flooring that poses a trip hazard.

## Lighting

Adequate lighting reduces the potential for accidents. Make sure that inoperative light fixtures are repaired immediately. Dirty light fixtures should be cleaned so that light levels are maintained.

## Aisles and Stairways

Aisles and stairways must be kept clear and not used for storage. Warning signs and mirrors can improve sight lines in blind corners and help prevent accidents. It is also important to maintain adequate lighting in stairways.

## Spill Control

The best method to control spills is to prevent them from happening. Regular cleaning and maintenance on machines and equipment is essential. Also, the use of drip pans where spills might occur is a good preventative measure. When spills do occur, it is important to clean them up immediately. When cleaning a spill, use the proper cleaning agents or absorbent materials. Be sure waste products are disposed of properly.

## Tools and Equipment

Tools and equipment should be inspected prior to each use. Damaged or worn tools should be taken out of service immediately. Tools should be cleaned and returned to their proper location after use.

## Maintenance

One of the most important elements of good housekeeping is maintenance of buildings and equipment. This means keeping buildings, equipment and machinery in safe and efficient working order and in good repair. When a workplace looks neglected - broken windows, defective plumbing, broken floor surfaces or dirty walls - these conditions can cause accidents and affect work practices. It is important to report faulty conditions to replace or fix broken and damaged items as quickly as possible.

## Storage

Proper storage of materials is essential and all storage areas should be clearly marked. Flammable, combustible, toxic and other hazardous materials should be stored in approved containers in designated areas that are appropriate for the different hazards that they pose. Materials that are stored should not obstruct aisles, stairs, exits, fire equipment, emergency eyewash fountains, emergency showers, or first aid stations. Also it is important that all containers be labeled properly. If materials are being stored correctly, the incident of strain injuries, chemical exposures and fires should be reduced dramatically.

## Individual Workspace

Many workplace injuries occur right in the employee's workspace. This space is often an overlooked area, so be sure to keep your own workspace clean and orderly.

**With your help, we can have a cleaner, neater and SAFER workplace!**