

Housekeeping on the Job

Housekeeping includes maintaining order, keeping things in designated spaces and ensuring that areas are neat and clean.

Effects and Benefits

Hazards of poor housekeeping include:

- Trips, slips or bumps into items
- Non-secure items falling
- Pest attraction
- Protruding item injuries
- Fires and chemical exposures
- Hazards concealed by clutter
- Wasted time and unsafe shortcuts
- Underestimation of hazards

Good housekeeping:

- Improves safety
- Reduces fire hazards and pests
- Boosts morale
- Saves time and effort
- Shows high standards and a commitment to quality and safety
- Attracts and pleases customers
- Is part of regulatory requirements

Planning and Inspection

- Document inspections with formal checklists
- Install and secure anti-slip **flooring** in areas that get wet or are difficult to clean
- Replace worn, ripped or damaged flooring
- Avoid placing cords and cables where people could trip over them
- Extension cords are for short-term use (consider installing a new receptacle instead)
- Make sure **aisles, stairs and platforms** are well-lit, clean, uncluttered and repaired
- Make sure aisles are wide enough to safely accommodate people/vehicles/materials
- Install warning signs and mirrors at blind corners
- Keep **walls** and other **painted surfaces** clean to reflect light
 - Make sure **safety paint** (such as yellow for hazards and obstructions) is clean and clearly visible.
- Prevent **spilled liquids**, which can cause slips, material damage and health hazards
 - Use appropriate containers
 - Keep lids closed when they aren't in use
 - Use secondary containers, as needed
 - Consult the Safety Data Sheet (SDS)
- Clean and maintain **machines** and **equipment** regularly
- Use drip pans, guards and oil pans where drips, leaks and spills are likely
- Be aware that materials such as dust, oil and fibers on electronics and motors can lead to overheating and fires
- Replace burned-out light bulbs immediately for security and safety
- Replace or fix items such as broken windows, damaged doors, defective plumbing and damaged flooring as quickly as possible

Designated Areas

Select **storage areas** that are convenient without compromising work or safety. Never allow stored materials to obstruct emergency equipment, first aid stations, aisles, stairs or exits. Make sure the area around sprinkler heads and electrical panels is clear. Take only the materials you need for the task at hand to your work area.

Keep **eating, drinking and smoking areas** away from flammable or toxic materials. Clean eating and drinking areas at every shift. Food and beverage waste can produce unpleasant smells and can also attract pests. Never smoke in any non-smoking areas; look for signage to indicate where you may or may not smoke. Designated smoking areas help protect air quality, prevent fires, and prevent chemical inhalation or ingestion. After they cool, empty ash receptacles regularly to prevent fires.

Maintain clean, sanitary **washrooms and other sanitary facilities** to protect health and safety.

Organization and Storage

- Set up suitable fixtures with marked locations for tools
- Put tools away immediately after using them
- Stack pallets horizontally so they won't fall
- Limit pallet stacking height (fire hazard)
- Keep vehicle interiors free of clutter
- Clearly mark all storage areas
- Keep storage areas clean and organized
- Keep storage doors and drawers closed
- Store frequently used items between knee and shoulder height

Cleaning

When a spill occurs, clean it up right away following the safety guidelines of your employer and the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) of the material. Safely dispose of used cleaning materials and use signs to alert people to wet floors, as needed.

NOTE: Never clean up any hazardous substance without the appropriate training and equipment. You may receive specialized training about hazardous waste disposal.

Don't allow combustible waste materials to build up; remove them. Discard oily rags in covered metal containers. Keep hot areas particularly clean and never store combustible materials there. Make sure nothing ever blocks the ability of a fire door to close completely.

Dust, Dirt and Chips

- Enclosures and exhaust ventilation systems can collect dirt, dust and chips
- Use gloves and other protective equipment to protect against splinters/cuts
- Use a standard vacuum cleaner, broom or mop to remove light dust or dirt
 - If you mop, use warning signs to alert your co-workers to the wet floor
 - Dampen floors before sweeping to reduce airborne dust
- Industrial vacuum cleaners are appropriate for heavier jobs or areas such as walls, ceilings, ledges and machinery
- Special-purpose vacuum cleaners and training are needed to clean up combustible dusts and other hazardous substances
- **Do not use compressed air on dust, dirt or chips**
 - It is ineffective and may result in clouds of combustible dust
 - Airborne particles may get into your eyes, strike you or you may breathe them in