



HOUSEKEEPING

Housekeeping is Safe Keeping

Have you ever seen those signs that say, "Please clean up after yourself. Your mother does not work here"? What if your mother really did work there? It would be funny but beside the point. As adults, we can't get away with creating a mess and then walking away – at least not if we value our co-workers – simply because we're too "important" (or too busy, lazy?) to be bothered with clean-up work. Did you do this when you were a child? Did you ever stop to think about the message you were sending to your mother (or father) and how that made them feel? Well, you should. No one is too important to pick up a broom and dustpan or simply to put the tools and materials back where they belong. Is housekeeping a safety issue or a morale issue? It's both. Have you heard the saying, "You never get a second chance to make a good first impression"? This absolutely applies to housekeeping at work. The negative impressions of poor housekeeping can adversely affect you and your co-workers, and when those surprise visitors come by for a tour, the implications could be devastating (read: disciplinary action, lost business opportunities, etc.). Most people who function every day in a messy, disorderly work environment will suffer from poor morale and reduced productivity, though they may not even be aware of the cause. Safety is an even more critical issue. If your housekeeping habits are poor, the result may be employee injuries, citations by a regulatory agency, low productivity, and even difficulty in securing future work. A clean workplace may not necessarily be a safe workplace, but a cluttered and dirty workplace is almost certainly not safe.

Here are some results of poor housekeeping practices:

- Injuries, when employees trip, fall, strike, or are struck by out-of-place objects;
- Injuries from using improper tools because the correct tool can't be found;
- Injuries from failure to use proper personal protective equipment, which could not be found;
- Lowered production because of the time spent maneuvering over and around someone else's mess, and time spent looking for proper tools and materials;
- Time spent investigating and reporting accidents that could have been avoided;
- Fires due to improper storage and disposal of flammable or combustible materials;
- Careless attitudes toward the quality of work product;

General housekeeping rules to remember:

- Clean up after yourself. Pick up your trash and debris, and dispose of it properly, or place it where it does not pose a hazard to others. Institute a routine cleaning schedule.
- Keep your work area clean throughout the day. This will minimize the amount of time needed to clean a "larger mess" at the end of the day.

- Dispose of combustibles and flammables properly. If improperly discarded, they increase the potential for fires and explosions.
- Remove protruding nails and other sharp objects to prevent someone from stepping on them or snagging themselves.
- Stack materials and supplies orderly and secure them so they won't topple.

An uncluttered workplace shows respect for those who work there. Help keep it that way!