

:: Housekeeping is Safekeeping ::

“You never get a second chance to make a good first impression.” Never has this phrase been as true as when it comes to housekeeping at work. The negative impressions and implications of poor housekeeping can affect you and coworkers for a long time to come. Morale is lowered for most people who must function every day in a messy, disorderly work environment, although they may not be aware of the cause.

Safety is an even more critical issue. If your housekeeping habits are poor, the result may be employee injuries, or even death, as well as citations by OSHA (or another regulatory agency) and difficulty in securing future work. How can such a “minor” issue have such serious consequences?

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.
- 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 and wastes.
- Substandard quality of finished products because of production schedule delays, damaged or defective finishes, ill-equipped employees, etc.
- Lack of future work due to a reputation for poor quality.
- “Wall-to-wall” OSHA inspections due to the “first impression” of the compliance officer.

General housekeeping rules to remember are:

- Clean up after yourself. Pick up your trash and debris and dispose of it properly, or place it where it will 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 will increase the potential for a fire.
- Remove protruding nails and other sharp objects, or hammer them flat, to prevent someone from stepping on them or snagging themselves.
- Stack materials and supplies orderly and secure them so they won't topple.

Do you value your health and safety, your work reputation, as well as your future employment? If you do, practice these general housekeeping rules.

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