

Good Housekeeping is Part of Your Safety Strategy

As children, we were taught to tie our shoes and pick up after ourselves. Later in life, we learned how to wash the dishes, make our beds, and drive safely. Unfortunately, no one told us that these skills were part of a strategy that would save our lives when we entered the workforce.

Poor housekeeping on the job results in many injuries every year, some fatal. Wet floors, disorganized workstations, unkempt storage rooms and cluttered stairways are just a few situations that trip up workers and send them to the hospital on extended injury leave.

Housekeeping is an injury prevention strategy that keeps everyone on the job injury-free.

When do we perform our housekeeping duties? Some might think it's a task that you perform at the end of the day. Others might say when you have time. What's the right answer?

Good housekeeping is a prevention strategy that starts the minute we get to work, and continues all day.

Every task we perform contains a housekeeping strategy. In fact, it's likely that you already perform some housekeeping duties without giving it a second thought - like cleaning up your mess and putting things away. But parts of a housekeeping strategy aren't so obvious. Maintaining tools, keeping workstations organized and free of clutter, disposing of waste properly and cleaning spills are tasks that take little effort.

Here are some housekeeping strategies that will help keep the jobsite injury-free:

MAINTAIN FLOORS – Keep all floors free of clutter, waste and dirt. When a floor is wet or slippery, post warning signs. Clean up spills when they happen, not when convenient. Follow proper safety procedures for each spill. When cleaning up a chemical spill or hazardous material, ask the supervisor what safety precautions need to be taken. When sweeping up dust and dirt, determine whether you need a special vacuum or sweeping compound.

MAINTAIN TOOLS AND WORKSPACES – An organized workspace is an important prevention strategy. It will prevent you from getting aggravated and using the wrong tool when you can't find the right one. Organizing the workspace is also the perfect time to clean tools and check for tool wear that might later cause injury.

MAINTAIN STORAGE AREAS – Is the storage area well identified and well maintained? When stacking inventory, don't stack the material higher than the maximum safety height. Make sure that the area is orderly and easy to navigate. Most importantly, don't block off emergency exits or electrical panels.

MAINTAIN YOUR SAFETY STRATEGY – Safety is a product of safe practices. Yes, you guessed it: one of these practices happens to be good housekeeping. Your safety equipment must be in good shape and you must use the right safety equipment for the job you are performing.

Remember, good housekeeping is not something you do at the end of your working day. It's a safety strategy that is a part of every job you perform. It's something to start thinking about from the moment you arrive at work. Most importantly, always talk to your supervisor when you feel that safety on the jobsite could be improved with better housekeeping.