

Industrial Housekeeping

Of all the factors contributing to job safety and health, good housekeeping often appears to be the least interesting and challenging. Yet good housekeeping—some call it "plantkeeping"—can be of vital importance.

Think about what can happen if an accumulation of oily rags tossed in a dark corner ignited one night—the next morning, no job. Or because eating areas were dirty, an outbreak of a serious disease interrupted jobs for weeks. Yes, good housekeeping is very important.

A positive attitude is a good place to start. People who like and want to work in an orderly surrounding have that positive attitude. And when that attitude is translated into behavior, they feel better, think better, do better work, and are safer—and so are their co-workers.

How can that be? because clean work areas and aisles help eliminate tripping hazards. Immediate cleanup of spills prevents slipping injuries. And keeping out-of-the-way places and storage areas uncluttered reduces the chances of disease and fire, as well as slips, trips, and falls.

Good housekeeping goes hand-in-hand with public relations. Both the exterior and interior of a plant should be attractive, projecting order, care, and pride. The condition of the building makes a marked impression on all who enter the plant, employees and visitors alike. A visitor's first impression of a company is important, and the company image affects the amount of business it does.

Who, Me? Yes, You!

Whose responsibility is this housekeeping? It's everyone's! Whatever an employee position or title in a company, cleanup tasks should not be shrugged off. The employee who sees a co-worker or supervisor pick up a piece of paper from the floor and put it in the trash is influenced by this action far more than any kind of sign or oral instruction.

Since housekeeping is everyone's responsibility, it's yours. So get in the habit of putting tools away in their proper place, cleaning up spills immediately, stacking cartons or parts neatly and safely, and picking up refuse and putting it in the proper waste containers. Do not allow trash cans to overflow. Remember, putting things in their proper place doesn't waste time—it saves time!

Lunchrooms and eating areas must be clean and sanitary. Food must never be eaten or stored where toxic materials are present. Hands must be washed before eating thoroughly to remove any hazardous or toxic substances.

Desirable Outcomes

The first and foremost results stemming from good housekeeping are safety and health, for both you and your co-workers.

Second, when good housekeeping becomes an ingrained habit and begins to happen naturally, the time and effort necessary to keep the workplace clean and safe is reduced.

Third, production quantity and quality are increased, which in turn contributes to improved job security.

Good housekeeping is thus an essential factor in a good safety program, promoting safety, health, morale, and production.