



Why Provide Good Housekeeping Training?

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Good housekeeping training plays a critical role in minimizing material handling incidents, boosting morale, and cultivating a healthier environment for all.

January signals a fresh start, a time of new goals, resolutions or maybe a “cut the clutter” initiative. As we move into 2024, maintaining a clean and organized workspace should be a priority. Consider providing some Good Housekeeping Training. Too often, good housekeeping isn’t addressed during onboarding or even in refresher trainings. It’s also commonly overlooked or gets pushed aside in favor of other trainings that are required or take a higher priority within the organization.

Let’s face it: for most people, cleaning up has been a dreaded chore since childhood, regardless of the attempts by many children’s television shows to serenade viewers with clever songs to make clean up just as much fun as playtime. In the workplace, there usually aren’t cleanup songs, and it can be very easy to let a mess accumulate when deadlines need to be met.

Introducing good housekeeping as an independent program and conducting a separate training for it adds one more thing to schedules and can sometimes be viewed by employees as a punishment. However, incorporating it into other trainings makes it a component of those already existing programs.

Keeping workplaces tidy does more than provide a morale boost. It also helps to reduce risk by eliminating hazards that are caused by clutter and unorganized spaces.

Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips, Trips, and Falls has been the leading work comp claim for the Wisconsin Technical Colleges for the last 20 years. While many people anticipate icy patches on sidewalks during winter months or water on the floor in a wet area, most storage areas are generally thought of as dry places.

This can cause employees to let their guard down. However, wet weather seeps in at entry doors, dock doors, and sometimes containers leak, creating spills in and around aisles. When water accumulates on a walking working surface and spills are left to spread, the risk of injuries increases.

These risks can be anticipated in most areas of a facility. However, because they don’t happen every day, even when plans and procedures are in place, and even if employees have been trained to clean them up promptly, cleanup may not be a common part of the daily routine.

Same-level fall awareness can be included with fall-from-height training. Incidental spill cleanup is a good fit for inclusion with hazard communication training. Including spill cleanup as part of other trainings also helps to reinforce it as part of a process and not just another thing that needs to be done.

Ergonomics

Stocking shelves, packing boxes and filling trailers are just a few of the tasks that keep material handlers in nearly constant motion. It's also a primary reason why sprains and strains are a leading cause of lost work time injuries each year.

While incorrect lifting and awkward motions are the leading reasons for injury, lack of housekeeping is commonly a contributing factor. Empty boxes left in aisles create tripping hazards. Loose packing materials such as shrink wrap and banding are slippery and can get tangled between employees' feet. Left unchecked, these wastes increase the risk of slips, trips and falls that cause soft tissue injury, lacerations, concussions and broken bones.

Good housekeeping is sometimes as simple as having an adequate number of recycling bins located in areas where packaging waste is created. This allows employees to quickly and conveniently pick up shrink wrap, banding straps and other packing materials as they are generated and put them in a predesignate area.

Where a procedure already exists, review it and add steps to help ensure that wastes are not abandoned. For example, add a step that instructs employees to break down a box after emptying it and take it to the cardboard recycling area before beginning another task.

Fire Hazards

A retail chain store has been in the news multiple times throughout the past three years for repeatedly violating OSHA's requirements for good housekeeping and maintaining fire exit routes in their stores. Storing packages in aisles, failing to remove empty boxes and unstable stacking are among the citations issued at several of their locations.

Storage space is a precious commodity in most workplaces. It can be easy to rationalize putting things in aisle ways or over-stacking pallets and racks for just a few minutes, especially while a truck is being unloaded. Not only do clutter and overcrowding create physical hazards for employees, they also create several fire hazards.

Piles that accumulate on floors can be initiated by an errant spark. Stacking products or supplies on top shelves that are too close to lighting and sprinkler heads can also be hazardous.

Having a plan that details where every item – from raw materials to finished products — is to be stored and having a procedure that includes immediately storing items in their designated spaces can help to eliminate hazards. Establishing designated temporary storage areas that are out of walkways is another alternative.

Mental Health

In addition to the hazards already mentioned, clutter and disorganization create unnecessary stress. They can also increase the time that it takes to find products or complete tasks, which can add an additional layer of stress.

When work areas are maintained in a clean condition, employees are better able to focus on the task at hand with fewer distractions. Incorporating good housekeeping measures into training and routine procedures reduces risks, prevents injuries, and helps to promote a healthier workplace.