

Workplace Housekeeping Practices and OSHA

Maintaining clean and sanitary conditions in your workplace is a critical part of your overall safety and health (S&H) program. Housekeeping practices help your workplace eliminate or control hazards; however, it must be an ongoing effort at your organization to be most effective. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) references housekeeping in [29 CFR 1910.22](#) and several other S&H standards (e.g., flammable liquids, sanitation, lead, material handling, silica, chromium VI). This one pager reviews common housekeeping practices from these OSHA standards to implement at your organization.

HOUSEKEEPING PROGRAM

Though not required in general industry (i.e., 29 CFR 1910 OSHA regulations), a written program helps you manage and organize housekeeping efforts at your organization and convey housekeeping rules to your workforce. Some organizations have a standalone housekeeping program, while others incorporate housekeeping specifics into other written programs (e.g., spill control prevention program, bloodborne pathogens program). Review applicable S&H standards to read housekeeping rules pertaining to your organization.



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WALKING-WORKING SURFACES

Ensure walking-working surfaces (e.g., floors, aisle ways, work stations) are clean, free of clutter, and dry to prevent injury or illness. OSHA says your workplace must:

- Keep floors free of hazards (e.g., spills, ice, loose floorboards, uneven floors, open holes)
- Ensure aisles and passageways have sufficient clearance, without obstructions (e.g., material lying across an aisle, material piled up on the floor)
- Refrain from exceeding the load capacities for floors, shelves, and mezzanines
- Clean and decontaminate working surfaces after contact with blood or other potentially infectious material
- Promptly clean up leaks and spills
- Stack materials securely and use blocking or interlocking methods, if possible
- Put tools and equipment away after use

Include in your housekeeping program:

- Responsibilities and expectations of employees and contractors (e.g., management, process owners and workers, maintenance, janitorial)
- Hazard assessment process to identify and evaluate housekeeping-related issues and hazards
- Schedule of when and where housekeeping measures are required
- Housekeeping rules from applicable S&H standards
- Housekeeping-focused inspection processes
- Safe work practices and procedures (sometimes also found in hazard analyses or standard operating procedures)
- Training requirements

EXITS AND FIRE SAFETY

Poor housekeeping inevitably leads to limited access to exits and exit doors, fire hazards, and increased fire risks. Access to emergency routes and exit doors, as well as emergency equipment, is critical for your employees. Be sure to:

- Prevent debris, slippery substances (e.g., ice, snow, grease), or accumulation of materials in egress routes leading to/from exits
- Ensure electrical cords and hoses do not cross aisle ways
- Keep clear access to emergency equipment (e.g., eyewash stations, showers, first aid kits), fire safety equipment, electrical systems and panels, live parts, and emergency shut off controls
- Store waste materials (including oil or greasy rags) in covered metal receptacles to prevent leaks or spills
- Remove and properly dispose waste materials from the workplace daily
- Maintain an 18" clearance under and around sprinkler heads
- Keep the grounds free of tall grass, weeds, refuse, and other combustible materials

INSPECTION, MAINTENANCE, AND REPAIR

Utilize your inspection process to identify housekeeping-related issues at your organization. OSHA says you must:

- Inspect walking-working surfaces regularly
- Guard identified hazards, or post signs, to prevent use of potentially hazardous walking-working surfaces
- Have qualified person(s) repair walking-working surfaces, as needed

BEST PRACTICES

Your housekeeping program and practices are only as effective as the effort put into them. Use your housekeeping findings to improve your safety management system:

- Identify trends and organizational needs (e.g., more shelving, additional electrical outlets, placement and use of waste bins) by analyzing housekeeping-related findings
- Set S&H goals and objectives to combat housekeeping trends, where necessary
- Integrate housekeeping findings into routine inspections and housekeeping checklists
- Brainstorm possible solutions with employees to address housekeeping findings
- Educate employees on the use of housekeeping practices

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