

SAFETY DIRECTOR BULLETIN

March 16, 2021

PRACTICING GOOD HOUSEKEEPING FOR SAFER FACILITIES

Housekeeping is crucial to safe workplaces in public settings like County Offices. Certain workplaces may present additional challenges such as hazardous materials, combustible dust, and other flammables found in Public Works and Utility Authorities. All workplace safety programs should incorporate housekeeping, and every worker should play a part. Here are some tips for effective workplace housekeeping:

Prevent Slips, Trips, and Falls

To help prevent slip, trip, and fall incidents it is recommended that you:

- Report and clean up spills and leaks.
- Keep aisles and exits clear of items.
- Consider installing mirrors and warning signs to help with blind spots.
- Replace worn, ripped, or damaged flooring.
- Consider installing anti-slip flooring in areas that cannot always be cleaned.
- Use drip pans and guards.
- Eliminate slippery conditions, such as rain, snow, ice, oil, and grease, from walkways and working surfaces as necessary.

Eliminate Fire Hazards

- Keep combustible materials in the work area only in amounts needed for the job. When they are unneeded, move them to an assigned safe storage area.
- Store quick-burning, flammable materials in designated locations away from ignition sources.
- Avoid contaminating clothes with flammable liquids. Change clothes if contamination occurs.
- Keep passageways and fire doors free of obstructions. Stairwell doors should be kept closed. Do not store items in stairwells.
- Keep materials at least 18 inches away from automatic sprinklers, fire extinguishers, and sprinkler controls. An 18-inch distance is required, but 24 to 36 inches is recommended.
- Hazards in electrical areas should be reported, and work orders should be issued to fix them.

Prevent Falling Objects

Recognizing existing and potential hazards and developing safe habits will help create a safer, more productive work environment:

- Shut file cabinet drawers when not in use.
- Open one filing cabinet drawer at a time to prevent a tip-over.
- Store heavy objects close to the floor and out of walkways.
- Store tools, equipment, and materials properly to prevent falling or sharp edges from being exposed.
- Stack materials to prevent sliding, falling, or collapsing.

Clear Clutter

A cluttered workstation creates more than just an eyesore – it can create a hazardous environment where workers can get injured. Workers should take time throughout the day and at the end of every shift to:

- Tidy up their desk or workstation.
- Return tools and other materials to storage after using them.
- Dispose of materials that are no longer needed.
- Keep aisles, stairways, emergency exits, and doors clear of clutter.
- Empty trash receptacles before they overflow.
- Ensure all cords are properly secured and covered.
- Make sure cups, glasses, and containers have lids on them to prevent spills.

Use and Inspect Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Tools

PPE is used to reduce or minimize the exposure or contact to injurious physical, chemical, ergonomic, or biological agents. A hazard cannot be eliminated by PPE, but the risk of injury can be reduced. It's recommended to:

- Make sure to wear the proper PPE for every job and task based on the potential risks. A Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) is required for every job by PEOSH.
- Make sure the PPE is in good working condition and properly fits the employee wearing it.
- Wear PPE when cleaning up spills or other material, such as broken glass or plywood.
- Wear basic PPE – such as closed-toe shoes and safety glasses – while performing housekeeping.
- Regularly inspect, clean, fix tools, and remove any damaged tools from the workstation.