

## SAFETY FACTS: GOOD WORKPLACE HOUSEKEEPING

Good housekeeping is an element of fire prevention, which extends to every type of occupancy. The goal of housekeeping as a fire preventive measure is to reduce unnecessary amounts of clutter which could either intensify a fire by acting as a fuel, or which could actually cause a fire. Cluttered areas also are potential targets for arson fires because the clutter makes it difficult to rule out an accidental ignition. Good housekeeping practices will maintain clutter-free premises at all times, not just when the clutter becomes unmanageable and removal becomes unavoidable. This practice applies both in and out of doors.

Housekeeping starts at the individual level. Each employee should be responsible for the condition of his or her work area and equipment. Closely supervise out-of-the-way areas such as attics, basements, closets, lockers, and under the stairs, which are prone to discard build-up. Orderly and spacious storage areas improve overall neatness.

Rubbish must be disposed of regularly. Daily removal of waste from buildings and yards is usually necessary. However, in some cases less frequent removal may be adequate. Whatever the interval, regularity is important. Place discarded materials in metal wastebaskets or barrels, preferably with tight fitting lids. Except where health or sanitation rules dictate, avoid using plastic wastebaskets as they often contribute to the severity of a fire. Empty rubbish into covered metal containers, when practical. Locate these containers at least 25 feet away from the building.

Recyclable scrap should be collected and neatly stored separately until future use or collection.

Where smoking is permitted, do not empty ashtrays into wastebaskets with other trash. Instead, collect all ashtray contents in a separate metal receptacle and douse with water before emptying.

Floor care and cleaning can introduce a fire hazard when combustible; absorbents such as sawdust are used. Noncombustible absorbents, clay based for example, are much safer. If use of a combustible liquid cleaner cannot be avoided, use only small amounts at a time, clean up thoroughly and properly discard residue when finished. Also, make sure there is adequate ventilation in the area.

It is especially important to remove dust and lint regularly from surfaces because dust is easily ignited. A dust-free zone of 10 feet should be maintained around any stove, furnace, boiler, etc. Also, investigate out-of-the-way locations for unnoticed dust buildup. Remove dust frequently with vacuums rather than with air hoses or brushes, which redistribute the dust and increase, rather than decrease, the hazard.

Weed and grass growth present another fire hazard, which can be reduced with regular cutting. Neither cause fires, but their presence will increase the effects of an existing fire. Grass and weeds should be cleared or neatly trimmed 25 feet from any building or storage area. Prohibit removal of dry weeds and grass by burning.

Combustible goods, idle pallets, and waste stored outdoors should be at least 25 feet from buildings, roads, and sources of ignition. Random storage of unused materials and equipment creates a cluttered situation that attracts other discardable material. Neatly store useful items; all others should be discarded. This is especially serious with storage of paints, chemicals, and machinery coated with oil, dust or lint. Keep outdoor storage piles separate from both buildings and neighboring piles to reduce the possibility of spreading fire from one area to another. Create access aisle and keep them free for firefighting equipment.

Dedication to housekeeping should be a habit and should not fluctuate from one day to the next. It is important to become and remain away of your workplace and its condition.