

GENERAL INDUSTRY

Safety education provided by the
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TARGET → ON SAFETY

Housekeeping and Ladder Safety

Introduction

Housekeeping in the workplace? Yes, but it is much more than just sweeping up or taking out the trash at the end of the day. Housekeeping includes a variety of duties that contribute to keeping our workspace clean and safe. With so much going on and so much to keep track of, a warehouse has a higher risk for accidents than other workplaces.

To be sure, general cleanliness is very important and we need to do all we can to keep our work areas clean and orderly. As we review the following topics, please consider where these issues may be a concern and what we need to do or change to maintain good housekeeping practices.

Keep Walkways Clear

It is fundamental that aisles and passageways remain clean and

orderly throughout the work area. This means we need to be aware of things that are stored in aisles or areas where people walk.

We should never store pallets or other material in passageways; we need to keep them clear at all times. We must stack containers and materials so they are stable and cannot slide or collapse. Pallets and four-wheeled carts should not be stored on end as they could easily tip. These pieces of equipment are unstable, and must always be stored flat or on all four wheels. Watch where combustible materials like wood are stored – they should never be in front of electrical panels. Nothing should be blocking sprinklers, fire exits or fire extinguishers.

We should also make a point to immediately pick up debris like strapping, stretch wrap and broken pieces of pallets that might

collect in aisles. Anything else that might become a tripping hazard, like cords, wires, loose flooring or trash, needs to be taken care of immediately.

Spills and equipment leaks are a normal occurrence, and that's OK. Of course, when you notice a spill, your first step should be the find its source and fix it. At the same time, use "pigs" (round absorbent material) to catch oil so that it doesn't get into passageways. Always check a chemical's safety data sheet (SDS) before touching it.

Staying Safe with Equipment

Remember that material handling equipment like forklifts, cranes, hoists and derricks is designed to move weights that are generally bigger and heavier than people. Not paying attention to when and

where material handling equipment is being using can result in injuries. Yes, operators of all material handling equipment must watch out for others and operate in safe locations, but we all are responsible for looking out when this equipment is around. If you work or stand under a crane, you're asking for trouble.

Aisles and passageways where material handling equipment is being used are designed to provide sufficient clear space, but your attentiveness is always very necessary. Get in the habit of looking around at intersections to see if traffic is approaching. If you approach a piece of material handling equipment, you might have the right of way, but that doesn't automatically make your way right. Always look both ways.

Working on Platforms

Working platforms are any areas where people need to stand to perform their work. This might be on the floor, on a ramp or on an elevated platform. Regardless of the type of platform, it is important that all working platforms are set up in such a way that they do not contribute to slips, trips or falls. Any working platform that is more than four feet off the ground or an adjacent platform must be guarded with a standard railing and toe board.

Pop Quiz

What is the safest ladder material to use in your industry?

If you said fiberglass, you were correct. It is the only ladder material that does not conduct electricity. Did you know that when wood ladders are moist, dirty or oil-soaked, they can conduct electricity too?

Preventing Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips, trips and falls are always listed within the top five types of injuries that occur in the workplace and at home. Falls are classified as tumbles from the same level (tripping over something), or tumbles from differing heights (falling down stairs). If we concentrate on good housekeeping, we can prevent these types of injuries.

There should never be anything stored in passageways because that creates a significant trip hazard. It is also important to ensure walkways are free of spilled materials such as water, oils, etc. All of these materials contribute to trip hazards.

Portable Ladders

You know ladders come in different lengths and types, designed for different uses and rated to hold different weights. Make sure the ladder you choose is taller than the point you want to reach (the top step of the ladder is

for storage, not your feet) and rated to hold enough weight. Straight or extension ladders must lean against the wall in such a way that when you stand straight up with your feet at the base of the ladder, your arms should be touching the beam when held at a 90-degree angle.

After having chosen the correct type of ladder, follow the correct safety precautions when using it. Always look where you and the ladder are going when raising, lowering or moving the ladder. When going up or down the ladder, always use two hands. That means tool belts must be used to carry equipment up or down the ladder. If you need to lean a bit when you are on the ladder, avoid going too far. If your belt buckle goes beyond the sides of the ladder, you are leaning too far and there is a good chance you will fall. When going up or down the ladder, always face forward. Finally, when moving the ladder, get off first instead of trying to bounce it from one point on a wall to another.