



Ladders and Housekeeping

The Basics

With so much going on and so much to keep track of, a warehouse or retail environment has a higher risk for accidents than other workplaces. That's why **general cleanliness is important, and we need to do all we can to keep our work areas clean and orderly**. How? By practising good housekeeping principles to keep our workspace clean and safe – including safe ladder use. As we review the following things you need to do to put safety into practice, think about where these issues may be a concern and what we need to do or change to maintain good housekeeping practices.

Keep Aisles and Passageways 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. Pallets and four-wheeled trolleys 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 cables, wires, loose flooring or rubbish - 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, or report it.

Respect Material Handling Equipment

Remember that material handling equipment like forklifts, are 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. Of course, forklift operators must watch out for others and operate in safe locations, but we all are responsible for looking out when this equipment is around.

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 junctions to see if traffic is approaching.** If you approach a forklift, you might have the right of way, but that doesn't automatically make your way right. Always look both ways.





Eliminate Trip, Slip and Fall Hazards

Slips, trips and falls are always listed within the top five types of injuries that occur in the workplace. 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 could cause someone to trip. It is also important to ensure passageways are free of spilt materials such as water, oils, etc. **All of these materials contribute to slip and trip hazards.**

Select the Right Ladder

Here is pop quiz for you: 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?

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.

Once you've selected the right ladder, you must use it correctly. You should also 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 you may 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.

Neatness Counts

There are many different ways that we can take positive steps to improve the overall look and feel of our working locations. Housekeeping involves many different facets of the operation, and whatever we can do to help maintain a work area will go far in improving our overall safety performance. As a rule, keep everything neat and in its place. When you see a problem, please don't think someone else will correct it because another employee may be thinking the same thing. Take the steps to fix it yourself.



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