

Housekeeping – Low Cost...High Benefit

Good housekeeping practices can be achieved at relatively low cost but provide significant production and safety-related benefits. In general, a well-organized and clean operation lowers production costs by making it easier to focus on value-added production work. It also reduces non-productive time spent searching for material and tools and makes better use of floor space. A clean operation reduces non-value-adding tasks like emergency cleanup work, time spent looking for material, and forklifts having to drive around clutter. It can also reduce costs from damaged material.

A well-organized workplace provides significant safety benefits by reducing fall hazards, improving material handling manually or with equipment, and providing more space for forklifts to operate in relation to people. Without these safety precautions, any workplace can contribute to serious injuries.

Housekeeping is often associated with just cleaning up at the end of the day; however, a well-planned housekeeping program will take a total approach regarding how the operation is organized, similar to Kaizen and 5S. Think about the following subjects to help plan your housekeeping policy:

- Start with workflow organization and operations control to reduce the amount of scrap material that's produced. This reduces costs and automatically results in a cleaner operation.
- Value-adding tasks transform or shape a product into something a customer desires. Non-value-adding tasks take time, resources, or space, but do not add value to the product itself. Minimize non-value-added work like housekeeping. Eliminate material that is being staged but is not necessary.
- Evaluate floor space and equipment layout to determine if it can be improved. This benefits housekeeping by providing more space in work areas and reducing the amount of material that is staged.
- Establish marked areas for tools to hang. Mark floors or use signs to designate staging areas where material should be staged. Putting everything in its correct place keeps it from mixing, reduces clutter, and makes items much easier to find or handle. People respond better to visual aids like signs and marked areas.
- Walk through each area and look for cords, hoses, or other objects on the floor. Determine if they can be moved or hung overhead to reduce clutter.
- Place adequate trash receptacles and cleaning tools in areas where they are easy to find and use. People are less likely to clean up when it's hard to remove or dispose of waste.
- Maintain forklifts and equipment to minimize spills of oil or other potential contaminants.
- Develop a routine for cleaning up at the end of the shift or periodically during the day. Set expectations that good housekeeping practices are standard operating procedures just like every other part of a job.
- Do not allow employees to eat, drink, or smoke in the work area, not only because of litter problems, but also because of hygiene concerns. Designated break areas should be used.

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