A Tidy Workplace Will Prevent Injuries

It's easy to dismiss workplace housekeeping as "a job for janitors" after you've gone home. After all, you might think, "Productive people produce. It wastes time to be extra neat."

Or does it? Think of the time you waste looking for tools or materials when someone doesn't put something back where it belongs.

Good housekeeping is everyone's responsibility. It involves:

♦ Promptly wiping up spills.

♦ Picking up items that pose a tripping hazard.

♦ Clearing away waste before it gets out of control or fuels a fire.

Slips, trips, and falls are the leading causes of occupational injuries. The National Safety Council estimates 300,000 workers in the United States are injured and 1,400 die in that manner every year. Poor workplace housekeeping habits cause many of these incidents. Housekeeping must be an integrated part of the daily workplace routine. Aisles and stairways must be kept clear of clutter, so people won't stumble and fall.

Take inventory of the items in your work area. Are all of them contributing to your work? Damaged tools, broken chairs, obsolete equipment, and excess materials are not helping the cause. In fact, they are likely causing you frustration and inefficiency and may create even unsafe situations. Turn in excess items and dispose of useless item.

Here are some other things to keep in mind:

♦ Never leave drawers on filing cabinets, storage spaces or desks open. A coworker's head or leg might discover them before his eyes do. Also, are power cords and cables strewn across the floor, over which an unsuspecting person might trip?

♦ Is there enough light? Light bulbs that get dirty or burn out and aren't replaced pose a serious hazard.

♦ Areas undergoing maintenance need to be roped off to keep workers from wandering into potential danger. If a floor is wet, a "caution, wet floor" sign should be posted.

♦ Don't leave oily or greasy rags hanging around. They pose a real fire hazard.

♦ Are trash cans emptied regularly?

♦ Are materials stacked safely, or could they fall onto an unsuspecting employee?

Have a place for everything, and return it to that place as soon as you are finished with it. But have no more items than you need in your work area. Surroundings free of clutter help you think more clearly. When you are able to focus on the job at hand, you can do your job better and avoid accidents.

Spiff up your work area to give yourself a lift. When you keep your workstation clean, tidy, and well-organized, you help yourself to work more effectively and safely.