NOAA's National Weather Service

Our Employees' Safety and Environmental Newsletter for Work and Home

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HOUSEKEEPING IS AN IMPORTANT PART OF YOUR JOB

"You never get a second chance to make a good first impression." Never has this phrase been so true as when it comes to housekeeping at work. These negative impressions and implications of poor housekeeping can affect you, your co-workers, and visitors your facility.

Housekeeping is a very important part of your job. Not only does it improve the overall appearance of your facility or work area, it shows that you take pride in where you work. The best way that you can help keep your workplace clean is to pick up after yourself. Don't leave it for the next shift or another person to worry about.

Reasons to keep your work area clean:

* Morale is lowered for most people who must function every day in a messy, disorderly work environment, although they may not be aware of the cause.
* You reduce trip and fall hazards.
* Increased production. You won't have to waste time looking for misplaced equipment. You will always know where your tools and equipment are when you put them where they belong after you use them.
* If someone falls because of materials you left on the floor, you will feel guilty because you were a causal factor in the accident. Also, the injured worker may want to remind you of that.
* You reduce a potential fire hazard by removing unneeded combustibles from the work area.

Tips to maintain a clean work area:

- Keep your work area clean throughout the day. This will minimize the amount of time needed to clean a "larger mess" at the end of the day.
- Develop a routine for cleaning up at the end of the shift or periodically during the shift.
- Dispose of combustibles and flammables properly. If improperly discarded, they will increase the potential for a fire.
- Stack materials and supplies orderly and secure them so they won't topple.
- This is not, by all means, all inclusive. The point I am trying to make is to take responsibility for yourself and your work area. Remember, a clean work area is a productive work area and also enhances safety!

MORE ON HOUSEKEEPING

Does your work area look like this?

Tips for Supervisors

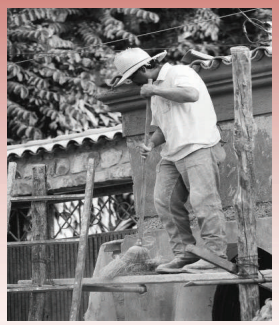
⇒ Conduct facility inspection utilizing the NWS inspection checklist. Review findings and ensure deficiencies are corrected.

⇒ Discuss workplace housekeeping procedures with your staff, along with clean-up schedule or philosophy, and inspection routines.

⇒ Remind your employees how they should report poor or dangerous situations, and who to report them to.

The latest report ranks the standards OSHA most often used in 2006 to smack violators with citations. They are:

1. Scaffolding
2. Hazard communication
3. Fall protection
4. Respiratory protection
5. Lockout/tagout
6. Powered industrial trucks
7. Electrical wiring
8. Machine guarding
9. Ladders
10. Electrical



Lesson Learned
Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure at Work

Recently a janitorial employee at a WFO experienced a "needle-stick" injury while emptying the trash. It occurred after an NWS employee on duty had just been diagnosed with diabetes and was performing blood sugar testing while at work.

The NWS employee discarded the lancet into the trash and the janitor came into contact with it while gathering the plastic trash bags. Both employees underwent the recommended two blood analyses over a six-month period with no indications of HIV and hepatitis.

We can prevent these types of accidental exposures in several ways:

Have "sharps" containers available for employees who may be testing their blood sugar. These are available from Safety-Kleen and other companies who dispose of biohazard waste.

Remind employees periodically at office Safety meetings that the sharps containers are available for anyone performing blood sampling, or keep the containers in the restrooms if the employees prefer to be anonymous.

Ensure all employees wear substantial gloves if handling trash receptacles, preferably leather, rather than latex.

Remind all employees to never push their hand into a waste receptacle to make more room for additional trash, as there could be a needle or lancet inside.

If an exposure occurs, be diligent in preserving the privacy and anonymity of the person(s) affected.

STRESS

What is stress?

Stress is your reaction to something you consider a challenge or a threat. Some situations -- a car accident, for example -- are stressful for anyone. Others affect different people in different ways. For instance, haggling over a price is very stress-producing for some people, but enjoyable for others.

When you are under stress, your body begins to 'gear up' for action. This makes you stronger and more alert, at least in the short term. In cases of extreme danger, this extra strength can save your life. Other times, it can help you get through a job or help you adjust to a major change, like the arrival of a new child.

How stress can harm you

Stress is a natural part of life. However, when it gets out of control, it can become very harmful. Often, a build-up of stress involves a problem that stays with you for months, or even years. Financial pressure is a prime example. Other times, it might be something beyond your control, like a stretch of bad weather. Still another time, it could be a problem that just seems too big to handle.

In all of these cases, you can not deal with the cause of the stress, at least not quickly enough. As a result, the stress persists and begins to take its toll on:

1. **Your health** When you 'gear up' under stress, your body begins to do more of some things and less of others. For example, blood circulation increases, but digestion slows down or even stops.

2. **Your relations with other people** Under stress, most people become so wrapped up in their own problems that they forget about everyone else. At the same time, they begin to take out their feelings on family and friends. The result can be bad feelings between family members, along with the loss of friends. As well, stress quickly becomes a family problem, not just your own.

3. **Your efficiency in your work** For a short time, stress can make you a better, more efficient worker. However, over the long haul, it will gradually wear you down. You will become physically weaker and begin to tire easily. At the same time, you will find it difficult to concentrate and will begin to make poor management decisions. Because of weariness and lack of concentration, you also will become much more accident-prone.

4. **More stress** Stress will have a snowballing effect, because all of the problems it causes -- health, family, and work -- will become new troubles in your life.

More on STRESS

The focus is control

Whatever you do, there is no way to completely eliminate stress. Instead, your goal should be to limit the amount of stress and to keep it under control. This requires a definite personal commitment, but the rewards should prove well worthwhile!

The first step in controlling stress

To learn to cope with stress, begin by taking a good look at yourself. Be as honest and objective as possible!

1. First, make a list of the things that cause you stress. Try to include any 'problem behind the problems'. For example, if you feel life is passing you by, that will color the way you see everything else.

   Also, make sure to include all of the little things, like doing business over the phone.

   After making the list, expect things you missed to crop up from time to time. As they do, simply add them to the end of your list.

2. Also, think about how stress has hurt you. Has it affected your health or work? Has it changed the way you treat other people?

3. Finally, try to decide if you are under more stress now than you were a year or two ago. If you are, have the pressures changed, or just your attitude toward them?

Learn to handle stress

Once you understand how stress is affecting you, you can begin to bring it under control. This will be a gradual process because, for the most part, it involves learning good habits and forgetting bad ones.

1. Talking about your problems is one good way of relieving stress. .
2. Learn to recognize when you are coming under stress. Everyone has a definite physical response, but it varies from person to person. When you learn what your own stress signals are, try to respond to them by telling yourself to relax. Concentrating on something other than the problem -- for example, taking a deep breath or deliberately relaxing your muscles -- will often help.
3. Look at the list of things that cause you stress and think about how serious each of them really is.
4. When dealing with a major problem, try to break it down into smaller parts.
5. Schedule your time realistically. Don't try to squeeze more work into a day than you can actually complete. Also, leave room for the unexpected.
6. Take occasional short breaks from your work. A person who works without breaks becomes steadily less effective during the course of the day. By contrast, a few minutes off will refresh you and give you a new start at the job.
7. Learn how to relax.
8. Develop other interests that will help you forget about your problems for a while. Sports work for some people, reading, exercising or socializing for others.
9. Consider outside help, such as counseling or group 'clinics'. While this is a more public approach to your problems, it has the advantage of input from other people. Often, they can point out things you might never see for yourself.

Environmental Concerns—Protecting The World We Live In

Obsolete and unserviceable electronics stockpiled at a WFO.

A facility looses valuable floor space when large quantities of electronic waste are stockpiled.

Do these pictures resemble your facility? Keeping your old PCs in a storage closet or warehouse? Just as recycling paper, cardboard, cans and bottles has become standard practice in most offices, recycling technology is an important step in keeping things out of landfills and protecting the environment from hazardous wastes. So what should you do with those old PCs, laptops, monitors, and electronic support equipment?

The three major parts of a personal computer—monitor, computer, and keyboard—can all be recycled. From the glass in the monitor to the metals used in the circuits, much of a computer's components can find new life in other applications. The Environmental Protection Agency now considers obsolete computers "hazardous waste." This hazardous label is in part due to the lead, mercury, and other toxic materials contained in all computers.

There are numerous opportunities to properly recycle used CRTs and other electronics. It is important from a resource conservation perspective to recycle the metals, plastics and glass in used devices. Electronics should be kept out of landfills, not because of environmental concerns, but because they contain resources that can be reclaimed. It is also important to identify and select a proper recycler to make sure used devices are processed in a safe and environmentally sound manner.

Once you receive approval from your property book manager to dispose of unusable electronic items consider recycling through the local municipality or with an independent company. Begin by contacting your state, county or city/town environmental office for a list of drop- off areas in your location or go to http://www.eiae.org/ for list of vendors in your state. Most vendors will pick-up the items from your facility at no cost.

Source: Electronic Industries Alliance (www.eia.org)

REMEMBER, SAFETY FIRST!

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