

## **SAFE HOUSEKEEPING GUIDELINES**

**Purpose:** These guidelines are basic housekeeping standards of practice at UWS in order to help ensure a safe work environment in all areas of the University.

Good housekeeping standards assist in maintaining a clean organised working space for employees, students and visitors, reducing the likelihood of accidental injuries and near misses.

**Benefits of Good Housekeeping:** Lower operating cost due to less time and effort required maintaining clean work areas.

- Reduce fire hazards due to control of combustible materials and unblocked access to fire protection equipment.
- Maintaining a clean and tidy office/workstation/work area/laboratory during the working day should be ensured, with the aim of minimising accidents, such as slips, trips, falls, collisions with objects and inadvertent exposure to chemicals.
- Improve traffic flow for people and equipment, especially for tight spaces, hallways, offices, or for example area that require materials-handling equipment like forklifts.
- More efficient space utilization within workspaces due to organisation.
- More efficient time management due to organization of materials records data.
- Improved control over resources and data due to better maintenance and organization of those resources.
- Conservation of resources, since resources can be better maintained and most efficiently utilized.
- Fewer mishaps or accidents requiring Workers Compensation, to reduce reduced slip, trip, and fall and chemical exposure hazards.
- Increased production time due to most efficient utilization of space, most efficient materials-movement.
- Higher employee moral due to improved work environment.

**MANY ACCIDENTS AND HAZARDS CAN BE DIRECTLY ATTRIBUTED TO POOR HOUSEKEEPING**

**Consultation:** Workplace inspections should include an examination of housekeeping. Inspections of offices for fire safety conditions also provide information regarding unsafe office storage. The OHS Committee or Representative may wish to attend the inspection or review it as a part of consultation.

Staff reports on housekeeping problems are also a valuable source of information about areas needing attention and should be assessed regularly.

Investigation of occupational health and safety incidents or accidents should consider if housekeeping was a contributing factor.

**Responsibilities and Risk Management:** Managers and supervisors have a legal responsibility for health and safety in the workplace. Being responsible for:

- Identifying hazards and eliminating or reducing the risk of hazards
- Improvement of workplace health and safety
- Making suggestions about their section/work activities
- Directing the flow of work: *what improvements can be made?*
- Providing information/instruction/training: *what safety training needs to be provided?*
- Improvements in housekeeping: *what practices will make the areas safer?*
- Ongoing risk management
- Taking corrective action where needed
- Implementing OHS policy and programs
- Monitoring and reporting.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that a high standard of housekeeping is maintained by all, including contract labour, and it is the responsibility of all employees to practice good housekeeping in their daily tasks and work areas.

**Emergencies Preparedness:** It is much easier to prevent fire than extinguish it. Observing safe practices and good housekeeping at all times are the most important factors associated with fire.

**Reception/Offices & Work areas:** The reception or foyer areas are normally a high traffic area because it is the main entrance to the building. Because of the large volume of people passing through, a reception area tends to get more soiled and untidy than other areas of the facility. For instance, dust build up,

dirty footprints on floors and carpets, sticky finger-marks on furniture and fittings, stray items left in walkways or lounge areas or furniture moved so that it causes an obstruction.

Control measures include:

- ensuring walkways and other thoroughfares are clear of clutter.
- regular cleaning and disposal of rubbish from these areas.
- maintaining good housekeeping in the reception area.
- training staff about procedures for emergencies such as fire, bomb threats, chemical spills and other emergencies.
- following the organisation's security procedures at all times.
- reporting any suspicious people or circumstances to the supervisor or security.
- Store materials by piling or arranging in an orderly manner according to a designated storage system of the office. If an area has no designated storage system that a logical method of storage may be devised by the department head.
- Provide for access to all work stations and areas, exits, fire extinguishers, fire blankets, electrical disconnects, safety showers, and other emergency aids.
- Keep free of physical obstructions that would prevent access, including objects, blocking path, spills of liquids or solids, etc
- Keep all door entrances completely free of debris, shrubs, or other obstructions.
- Floors should be clean, dry, and free of waste, unnecessary material, oil and grease.
- Have an adequate number of waste receptacles provided at accessible locations throughout all work areas.

**Storage facilities:** Needs to be maintained and reviewed periodically to ensure that they are functioning safely and are being used to best advantage.

Storage of cleaning products is also important. Each product should be stored in an appropriate container and clearly labelled with the product name. Cleaning materials that contain hazardous materials must be correctly labelled, must have an MSDS with them and be recorded in the unit's hazardous substances register. (see Chapter 6 of the OHS regulations 2001 for more detail)

**Laboratories/Workshops:** Have emergency spill kits and other spill-up equipment and materials available and clean up spills as soon as they occur.

**Stairways Internal and External:** Must have safe stairs that are clean, dry and free of waste, well lighted and improved with adequate handrails and treads that are in good condition.

Any stairs or platforms adjacent to or leading into the building(s) must be provided adequate treads to climb, and an area clean and free of materials.

### **Health and Hygiene Practices:**

Common factors involved in the spread of human infectious organisms include:

- Sick employees
- Employees with open cuts and scrapes
- Employees who touch their faces and mouths with their hands
- Employees who do not wash their hands after using the restroom
- Unwashed hands or contaminated gloves
- Unwashed and poorly sanitized food handling areas, and soiled clothing.

#### *Personal Hygiene*

- All workers should have ready access to washing facilities, especially where they may be exposed to contaminants such as dust or chemical substances.
- Staff should have access to meal facilities so that they are not required to eat or drink in areas that have been exposed to contaminants. (eg. Technical Officers should not eat in or near where chemicals are stored).
- Staff working or visiting Laboratory areas should wash their hands immediately after leaving the area.

#### *Hands should always be washed:*

- After using the toilet
- After coughing, sneezing, using a handkerchief or tissue
- After using tobacco, eating or drinking
- After engaging in any activity that may contaminate the hands such as taking out the garbage, cleaning chemicals, or picking up dropped items,
- After caring for or touching animals
- Before returning to the workstation, regardless of the reason for leaving the station.

#### *Food Hygiene*

- Harmful bacteria can be transmitted through poorly cleaned eating areas and utensils and unwashed dish cloths.

- Old food in the work fridge is not only smelly; it can introduce bacteria into the fresh food.

**Training:** All staff members undertaking a hazard identification inspection must be trained in that procedure. [Clause 13 (3) OHS Regulations 2001]The OHS&R Unit provides workplaces training for Managers and Supervisors as a part of the Management Essentials mandatory training. If you work with chemical substances you suspect of posing a hazard and you haven't been trained in its safe use, contact your supervisor immediately. The Unit also provides training in Management of Hazardous Substances and Dangerous Goods.

**Further Information:**

Good Housekeeping in Industry (1987) Published by the Department of Labour and Industry.

**Housekeeping Inspection Form – EXAMPLE ONLY**

**Area Inspected:**

**Date of Inspection:**

**Inspected By:**

Area	Factor	Corrective Action
<b>Office Areas and Amenities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Offices are free of clutter and piles of paper.</li> <li>• Shelf storage is orderly and floor coverings intact.</li> <li>• There are no exposed computer leads, double adaptors in use or frayed electrical cords, or frayed cords to electrical appliances.</li> <li>• Employee lunch areas are clean.</li> <li>• Tables and food preparation benches are free of rubbish.</li> <li>• Microwaves and fridges are wiped clean regularly.</li> </ul>	
<b>Stairs/Passageways</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Passageways are free of obstructions.</li> <li>• All stairs are free of rubbish, oil and grease.</li> <li>• Slip resistant treads and toe-boards are intact and handrails in place are intact and secure.</li> </ul>	
<b>Fire and Emergency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fire doors are closed and not propped open.</li> <li>• Fire extinguishers are not free standing and are secured in holders to the wall and have signs stating use for type of fire to be fought.</li> </ul>	
<b>Tools and Equipment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tools and equipment are correctly stored in their proper place when not in use.</li> <li>• Area is keep clean of rubbing.</li> </ul>	
<b>Outdoor Areas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The surrounding grounds and parking areas are free of rubbish, unnecessary materials.</li> </ul>	