

CONSTRUCTION

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TARGET → ON SAFETY

Housekeeping and Ladder Safety

Introduction

Housekeeping in construction is much more than just sweeping up or taking out the trash at the end of the day. Housekeeping includes a variety of duties that contribute to keeping our workspace clean and safe. With so much going on and so much to keep track of, a construction site is at a high risk for accidents. To be sure, general cleanliness is very important and we need to do all we can to keep our work areas clean and orderly. As we review the following topics, please consider where these issues may be a concern and what we need to do or change to maintain good housekeeping practices.

Keep it Clear

It is fundamental that aisles and passageways remain clean and orderly on the job site. This means

we need to be aware of things that are stored in passageways or areas where people walk.

We should never store tools or materials in passageways; we need to keep them clear at all times. We should also watch where cords or hoses run – if they are in someone’s path they are a tripping hazard. We should also make a point to immediately pick up obstacles in passageways like debris, food or equipment, which all can cause an unwanted fall. Anything else that might become a tripping hazard, like cords, wires, loose flooring or trash, 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 to find its source and fix it. At the same time, use “pigs” (round absorbent

material) to catch oil so that it doesn’t get into passageways.

Stay Alert Around Equipment

Remember that material handling equipment - like forklifts, cranes, hoists and derricks - is designed to move weights that are generally bigger and heavier than people. Not paying attention to when and where material handling equipment is being used can result in injuries. Of course, operators of all material handling equipment must watch out for others and operate in safe locations, but we all are responsible for looking out when this equipment is around. If you work or stand under a crane, you’re asking for trouble.

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 intersections to see if traffic is approaching. If you approach a piece of material handling equipment, you might have the right of way, but that doesn't automatically make your way right. Always look both ways.

Protecting Yourself on Platforms

Working platforms are any areas where people need to stand to perform their work. This might be on the floor, on a ramp or on an elevated platform. Regardless of the type of platform, it is important that all working platforms are set up in such a way that they do not contribute to slips, trips or falls. Any working platform that is more than four feet off the ground or an adjacent platform must be guarded with a standard railing and toe board.

Slips, Trips and Falls

Slips, trips and falls are consistently listed within the top five types of injuries that occur on the job site. 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 both of these types of injuries.

There should never be anything stored in passageways. It is also

Pop Quiz

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.

important to ensure walkways are free of spilled materials such as water, oils, etc. All of these materials contribute to slip and trip hazards.

Ladders

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.

After choosing the correct ladder, use proper safety procedures when using it. 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, using a tool belt 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 could easily fall. When going up or down the ladder, always face forward. Finally, when moving the ladder, get off first instead of attempting to bounce it from one point on a wall to another.