

Housekeeping

In this housekeeping toolbox talk, review the basics of keeping the jobsite safe and clear of hazards.

Housekeeping

Construction sites are often hectic, with many workers, contractors, and vendors simultaneously collaborating on a variety of different tasks. On a busy jobsite, keeping a tidy work area reduces the risks of accidents and injuries.

You'll learn best construction housekeeping practices in this quick 5 minute safety talk.

What is housekeeping?

On a construction site, housekeeping refers to the practice of keeping your site clean, tidy, and free of unnecessary hazards.

Good housekeeping rules

Cleaning up is the last thing anyone wants to do at the end of a long day. But, there are some tips you can follow that will make housekeeping a little easier.

Housekeeping dos

- Designate an area for rubbish and waste
- Stack and store materials safely
- Maintain a safe work area
- Keep access routes clear
- Put tools away when you are done
- If it's broken, fix it
- Keep cables organized and taped down
- Avoid fire risks
- Make others aware of potential issues

Housekeeping don'ts

- Do not permit rubbish to fall freely from any level of the project - use chutes or other approved devices
- Do not throw tools or other materials

- Do not raise or lower any tool or equipment by its own cable or supply hose

Flammable material

If working with flammable and explosive materials, here are a few additional tips to follow:

- Store flammable or explosive materials such as [gasoline](#), oil, and cleaning agents apart from other materials
- Keep flammable and explosive materials in approved containers
- Store full barrels in an upright position
- Keep gasoline and oil barrels on a barrel rack
- Store empty barrels separately
- Post signs prohibiting smoking, open flames, and other ignition sources in areas where flammable and explosive materials are stored and used
- Store and chain all compressed gas cylinders in an upright position.
- Mark empty cylinders
- Ventilate all storage areas properly
- Ensure that all electrical fixtures and switches are explosion-proof where flammable materials are stored
- Provide the [appropriate fire extinguishers](#) for the materials found on the jobsite

Housekeeping is not just defined as cleanliness. It requires that you pay close attention to the jobsite and important safety details.

Reasons for housekeeping

If good housekeeping is not practiced, the jobsite can become a big, hazardous obstacle course, leading to serious injuries and accidents. Additionally, when the jobsite is full of discarded materials, debris, and misplaced objects, then you may fail to identify more serious health and safety hazards.

Poor housekeeping can also contribute to fires. Avoid excessive storage of boxes and other combustible materials and make sure stored materials never block any exit, walkways, electrical panels, or equipment.

Accidents caused by poor housekeeping

Keeping the work area clean and organized is an ongoing operation. Infrequent, periodic cleanups are not as effective as a continuous effort. Housekeeping tasks must be completed on a regular basis.

These are some of the common accidents caused by poor housekeeping:

- Tripping over loose objects on floors, stairs, and platforms
- Being hit by [falling objects](#)
- Slipping on greasy, wet, or dirty surfaces
- Striking improperly stored objects, poorly stacked items, or misplaced material
- Cutting, puncturing, or tearing the skin of hands or other parts of the body on nails, wire, or steel strapping
- Property damage incidents involving moving equipment or vehicles
- Caught in/between injuries

Housekeeping should be a routine task, and everyone is responsible for doing their part.

Construction site housekeeping checklist

We all know that [construction sites present many hazards](#) to workers, and keeping the site clean of debris can help reduce risks. A housekeeping checklist can help you see if your site is up to standard and show you what you can do to improve housekeeping.

Working area

- Is safe access to the jobsite provided for all workers?
- Are walking and working areas kept clear, and are any liquid or spilled materials cleaned up immediately?
- Are stairways kept free of materials, supplies, and obstructions?
- Are debris and trash picked up and placed in proper containers?
- Are nails, scrap lumber, and other debris kept clean and organized in work areas?
- Are structure openings covered adequately?

Materials and Storage

- Are items not being used (such as tools, cords, chains) stored in their proper locations?

- Are material storage areas kept clean and free of unnecessary materials and debris?
- Is loose scrap or light material that could be blown by high winds properly secured?
- Are empty cement bags and other dust-producing materials removed from the work site?
- Are materials at least 6 feet from openings, roof edges, and trenches?
- Are nails in protruding lumber bent over or removed?

Waste

- Are trash containers with self-closing covers placed throughout the jobsite?
- Are chutes provided to remove waste from the upper floors?
- Are drip pans used to collect oil and fluids?
- Are all scrap, waste, and surplus materials disposed of in accordance with federal regulations and local codes?
- Are all oil-soaked and paint saturated rags, clothing, or waste placed in combustible receptacles with self-closing lids?
- Is combustible waste scheduled for frequent collection and removal?
- Are used oil containers and dumpsters locked to secure them from unwanted waste?

Vehicle housekeeping

- Are windshield and windows free from dirt, grime, or cracks/chips that affects visibility?
- Are mirrors clean from dirt, smudges, or damage that could obstruct the view of the driver?
- Are seats and floor free of obstructions and/or debris, such as tools, trash or water bottles?
- Is the dashboard cleared of folders, tools, or other items that can shift during operation?
- Are any items or trash underneath the vehicle seats?
- Are all equipment, tools, or material that was transported by the vehicle now properly stored in a secure area?

If your jobsite can't answer yes to all of these questions, you may need better housekeeping practices.

Good housekeeping is a good safety practice

The benefits of good housekeeping far exceed the small additional effort that keeping the jobsite clean takes each day. It also sets the tone for a safe work environment.

If you have any questions about the housekeeping practices on your jobsite, please ask your supervisor.