

## The Importance of Housekeeping within the workplace

In the age of the busy workplace where timescales have to be adhered to and production targets have to be met is the essence of a successful company. It is also important not to forget about the safety of the workforce from the hazards and risks that are part of the very environment that is all around. The smallest accidents can happen from the most innocuous activity. It is very important to keep the work area tidy from debris from the work activity such as sawdust, swarf and paper cuttings and from the materials and substances that are part of the every-day work process.

### Risk

Risk is the likelihood and severity of a hazard reaching its potential. There are many risks too not keeping a tidy workplace such as the increase in slips, trips and falls which is one of the biggest causes of accidents in the workplace with many lost hours. This could be from waste materials blocking walkways or from spillages of oil and lubricants that have not been cleaned up immediately after spillage or leaks.

The increase of a fire risk from substances and articles not being put away in suitable containers is also a good reason to keep a tidy workplace. There are many sources of fuel and ignition in the workplace which could lead to fire, so there is no excuse for leaving debris waiting to be ignited.

There is also a risk from explosions from dusts that have the potential to ignite when in the right concentration and environment. These are dusts usually found in the food processing and the sugar refining industries. However there are many instances of dusts that have the potential to be an explosive hazard.

### Control

Controlling hazards and reducing the likelihood that they will occur is a responsibility of everyone at work. It is the management's responsibility however to ensure that sound policies and procedures are in place for the timely removal of these hazards.

Being able to keep a well-kept work area that is free from hazards, ensuring safety at work and reducing the amount of absence from work is largely down to good housekeeping procedures in the workplace. These include the following:

1. Ensure that spillages are cleaned up straight away and not ignored.
2. All waste materials are placed in the right receptacles for disposal.
3. In work areas that produce particularly large volumes of waste materials such as working on milling machines and lathes, ensure that the work area is cleaned several times during the day to remove the waste.
4. Training the workforce in the importance of keeping clean areas.
5. Do not allow any dusts to accumulate in the workplace. Put in suitable engineering and procedural controls.
6. Keep walkways clear at all times.
7. Investigate any accidents and near misses and review procedures.

### Summary

Simple every day procedures such as keeping a tidy workplace can significantly reduce the potential from hazards turning into accidents. This will improve the workforce morale and reduce the amount of lost hours due to accidents to a minimum.