Housekeeping and Company Culture

We think you’ll agree that a neat and tidy workplace promotes safety on the job by lessening the risk of a slip, trip or fall injury. The old housekeeping motto of “a place for everything and everything in its place” still rings true today.

There are several common methods used by many companies to keep a clean workplace:

• Make employees responsible for their own work area.
• Assemble rotating cleaning crews.
• Allow five or 10 minutes at the end of the shift to clean up.
• Designate a dedicated cleaning/sanitation crew to clean the facility each evening (or day).
• Conduct facility audits to spot check for dirty areas. If found, clean them.

Many years ago, companies started to practice 5S and 6S (now 7S and 8S) theories of workplace cleanliness, order and safety. The 5S concept was developed in Japan and includes five primary phases:

1. **Sorting** — Eliminate all unnecessary tools, parts and instructions. Go through all tools and materials in the plant and work area. Keep only essential items and eliminate what is not required, prioritizing things per requirements and keeping them in easily-accessible places.
2. **Straightening** — There should be an orderly place for everything.
3. **Systematic cleaning** — Clean the workspace and all equipment. Keep it clean, tidy and organized.
4. **Standardizing** — Work practices should be consistent and standardized. All workstations for a particular job should be identical, and all employees doing the same job should be able to work in any station effectively.
5. **Sustaining** (self discipline) — Maintain and review standards.
Additionally, there are three other phases included (6S-8S): safety, security and satisfaction.

**OSHA's Take on Housekeeping**

OSHA compliance guidelines that address general/basic housekeeping can be found in standard 29 CFR 1910.22 as follows:

- **1910.22(a)**  
  **“Housekeeping”**  
  1910.22(a)(1) — All places of employment, passageways, storerooms and service rooms shall be kept clean and orderly and in a sanitary condition.  
  1910.22(a)(2) — The floor of every workroom shall be maintained in a clean and, so far as possible, a dry condition. Where wet processes are used, drainage shall be maintained, and false floors, platforms, mats or other dry standing places should be provided where practicable.  
  1910.22(a)(3) — To facilitate cleaning, every floor, working place and passageway shall be kept free from protruding nails, splinters, holes or loose boards.

- **1910.22(b)**  
  **“Aisles and Passageways”**  
  1910.22(b)(1) — Where mechanical handling equipment is used, sufficient safe clearances shall be allowed for aisles, at loading docks, through doorways and wherever turns or passage must be made. Aisles and passageways shall be kept clear and in good repair, with no obstruction across or in aisles that could create a hazard.  
  1910.22(b)(2) — Permanent aisles and passageways shall be appropriately marked.

- **1910.22(c)**  
  **“Covers and Guardrails”** Covers and/or guardrails shall be provided to protect personnel from the hazards of open pits, tanks, vats, ditches, etc.

The average OSHA citation for poor housekeeping is $1,955.30, according to the OSHA citation data (October 2010 through September 2011) for manufacturing companies taken from osha.gov. Please note: This isn’t the only OSHA standard (1910.22) which encompasses housekeeping, but rather the General Housekeeping rule as posted in the standard.

**Housekeeping and Culture**

So how does a clean workplace improve employee moral, behavior and ultimately improve your overall culture? It’s simple:

- Employees like to come to a clean workplace.  
- They take a sense of pride in keeping their workplace clean.  
- There is less chance of a slip, trip or fall as you eliminate potential hazards.  
- It’s easier to keep a clean work area consistently clean versus doing it sporadically.  
- Necessary workplace tools and equipment are clean and easier to find, eliminating the time it takes to search for items if it’s unorganized.  
- It’s a more effective use of space.  
- The building simply looks nicer, thus impressing internal and external customers.

Many safety professionals and consultants agree that clean workplaces tend to have fewer injuries. Additional benefits include fewer fire hazards, and better hygienic work conditions leading to improved health and avoidance of OSHA citations. Not convinced? Ask any of your co-workers what type of place they want to work in — clean or dirty? We think you will already know the answer.