



Establishing a Housekeeping Program

Good housekeeping reduces the losses caused by fires. Keeping interior and exterior areas of an operation as clean as possible will help reduce ignition sources and minimize fire exposures. To achieve this goal, management should evaluate its operation and establish an appropriate written housekeeping program for the facility. Management must consider the following when establishing such a program:

1. A sweep schedule needs to be established for daily removal of combustible waste materials from all work areas. Special care should be taken to remove trash accumulation from basements and utility rooms. Due to their remoteness, these little-used areas are often ignored.
2. Noncombustible waste containers with fitted covers should be placed in sufficient numbers throughout work areas. Empty these containers daily as part of the sweep schedule.
3. Place waste materials in outside, noncombustible containers for subsequent removal. Empty containers frequently to prevent their overflowing. These containers should be placed as far away from the building as allows for practical use.
4. Machines that use lubricants or oil should have drip pans beneath them to catch any dripping liquid. Clean the drip pans on a regular schedule. Regular maintenance and repairs can reduce the amount of lubricant a machine loses. Oily rags should be placed in separate noncombustible waste cans with fitted covers (UL Rag Cans). Empty these cans daily as part of the sweep schedule.
5. Some operations generate combustible dust that settles on surrounding walls, ceilings, and structural members. To control dust exposure, dust should be removed frequently by vacuuming walls, structural members, piping, and electrical conduits. Only vacuum cleaners listed for specific use in hazardous locations should be used for this procedure. Do not use compressed air to blow dust off surfaces. This can cause the dust particles to reach an explosive mixture in air.
6. Equipment such as dust collectors, commercial cooking equipment, and industrial ovens will require special cleaning procedures that the housekeeping program must address in scheduled meetings.

7. Weeds and trash surrounding the exterior of the building should be removed frequently.
8. Outside storage goods, such as wooden pallets, need to be neatly piled away from any structure and provided with adequate aiseways. Storage areas must be kept clear of trash and weeds.

Management should actively demonstrate its support of the housekeeping program to the employees. Their cooperation is vital to the success of the program. Individuals can be selected to inspect the operation at scheduled intervals. Review of housekeeping procedures must be a part of the facility's overall safety inspection. The written results of these inspections should be presented to management. Problems discovered during the inspection need to be discussed with those employees responsible for the housekeeping. The problems must be corrected promptly.

Establishing a formal housekeeping program could help management minimize fire exposures within the operation. Management can insure an effective program through constant monitoring and making changes to the housekeeping program as needed.