

SAFE WORK PRACTICE: WORKPLACE HOUSEKEEPING

Effective workplace housekeeping helps to eliminate or reduce workplace hazards and promote a safe work environment. It's an ongoing task and a basic part of incident and fire prevention.

Housekeeping is more than maintaining a clean work space; it includes keeping work areas neat and orderly; eliminating slip and trip hazards; and removing excess materials such as paper and other fire hazards from the work area. It also considers the use of the work space, furniture configuration, and adequate storage.

If the sight of debris, clutter, and spills is accepted as normal, then other more serious health and safety hazards may be overlooked.

Regular, effective housekeeping practices lead to:

- Fewer slip/trip accidents
- Decreased fire hazards
- Lower worker exposures to environmental nuisances (e.g. dusts, vapours)
- Better control of tools and materials, including inventory and supplies
- More efficient equipment maintenance and cleanup
- More effective use of space
- Better hygienic conditions leading to improved health
- Improved morale
- Improved productivity

SAFE WORK PRACTICES

Housekeeping order is maintained, not achieved. Cleaning and organization must be done regularly to be effective. Regular, ongoing cleaning and tidying is more effective and less time consuming than periodic "panic" cleanups.

DUST AND DIRT REMOVAL

Dust can be removed from surfaces using a damp cloth or an environmentally friendly cleaner.

Review the information on the label or the Safety Data Sheets (SDS) prior to using any cleaning products.

Only use a CSA-approved step-ladder to access hard-to-reach surfaces.

Carpets are vacuumed and/or deep cleaned by placing a request with Environmental Services. Ensure all items are removed from the area that has been identified in the cleaning request before they arrive.



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FLOORS AND WALKWAYS

Keep floors clear of debris such as boxes, extension cords, and food debris. Boxes and extension cords may lead to slip/trip incidents, while food debris can attract unwanted pests such as mice or fruit flies.

Keep aisles clear at all times to accommodate people and equipment comfortably and safely.

Do not use aisles and stairways for temporary “overflow” storage.

LIGHTING AND LIGHT FIXTURES

Dirty light fixtures and burned out light bulbs reduce essential light levels. This can create additional hazards in stairwells or storage areas.

Input an Archibus Frontline request to have burned out bulbs replaced or light fixtures cleaned if they appear dusty or dirty.

- **Input an Archibus Frontline request if you notice burnt out lighting in stairways and/or aisle ways.**

SPILL CONTROL

Prevent spills from occurring by performing regular cleaning and maintenance of machines and equipment. Use drip pans and guards where possible spills might occur.

When spills do occur, clean them up immediately. Absorbent materials are useful for wiping up greasy, oily or other liquid spills. Dispose of used absorbents properly and safely, particularly if they have been used to wipe up hazardous materials – consult labels or SDS for disposal information.

For larger water or similar spills on campus that cannot be addressed internally, contact Environmental Services.

- **Input an Archibus Frontline request if you come across a spill in a publicly accessible area.**
- **For serious spills involving hazardous chemicals, building facilities or motor vehicle fluids, [contact EH&S](#).**

TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

Store tools and equipment in an organized manner and safely out of the way when they are not in use. Maintain an organized workspace wherever you are working (e.g. office, classroom, field location) to reduce trip hazards.

Return tools/equipment promptly after use to reduce the chance of them being misplaced or lost.

Regularly inspect, clean and repair all tools and take any damaged or worn out tools out of service.

Powered and electrical tools and equipment used at MRU must be CSA or UL certified. This includes, but is not limited to extension cords, power adapters, small appliances (e.g. water kettles, coffee makers), and power tools and machinery. The certification marker can be found on the cord or the bottom or side of the equipment itself.

Ensure that all tools / equipment are shut down when not in use. Best practice for tools/equipment includes an automatic shut off.



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Refer to the manufacturer’s manual for specific instructions that may pertain to tool and equipment storage and maintenance.

WASTE DISPOSAL

Familiarize yourself with the waste streams on site and sort your waste responsibly to reduce the impact of contaminated waste streams on campus.

Ensure organic waste bins are kept closed to dissuade fruit flies and other pests from visiting the workspace.

- **For questions, requests, or concerns with waste management, contact Environmental Services.**

Hazardous waste (including some consumer products) require special disposal. If you need to dispose of a material that is managed under WHMIS or has a hazard symbol on the container, **contact the MRU Hazardous Waste Specialist in EH&S for additional information.**

STORAGE

Reduce paper storage by scanning files electronically whenever possible.

Stored materials must be stored at least one metre of clear space under sprinkler heads.

Stacked boxes and other materials must be kept on a firm foundation and stored no higher than 1 m to reduce the risk of toppling. Reposition or secure unstable loads.

Store items on shelves at heights that are easily accessible when possible, to reduce the chance of overreaching or use of stepladders. Overreaching increases the risk of strain injuries, while working on a step ladder increases the risk of a fall.

Stored materials should not obstruct aisles, stairs, exits, fire equipment, emergency eyewash fountains, electrical panels, emergency showers, or first aid stations. All storage areas should be clearly marked.

Flammable, combustible, toxic and other hazardous materials should be stored in approved containers in designated areas that are appropriate for the different hazards that they pose. Storage of materials should meet all requirements specified in the fire codes and the regulations of environmental and occupational health and safety regulations.

REFERENCES

Canadian Centre of Occupational Health and Safety. 2018. Workplace Housekeeping – Basic Guide.

REVISION HISTORY

Date	Revision	Notes
May 2019	01	Creation of Safe Work Practice