BC MUNICIPAL SAFETY Association

Safety Talk

Housekeeping and worksite cleanliness

Every year, poor housekeeping and storage account for a significant percentage of accidents and injuries in the workplace and at worksites.

We all know how fast rubbish accumulates – scrap lumber, unused/old equipment, broken bricks, pieces of drywall, broken furniture, strap-bands and packaging.

Construction rubbish is often irregular in shape, hard to handle, and full of sharp objects.

One of the biggest problems is packaging. Too often it gets removed from material and left behind. This creates tripping and slipping hazards. It also makes other hazards hard to see. Even worse, it invites more mess.

When a site/work area isn't cleaned up, no one cares about leaving more garbage where it drops. When that happens, you can't see faulty wiring, protruding nails and damaged flooring.

Mess also makes it difficult to use material-handling equipment. As a result, more material gets handled manually. This increases the risk of injury and damage.

Housekeeping means cleaning up scrap and debris, putting it in containers, and making sure the containers are emptied regularly. It also means proper storage of materials and equipment.

- Clean up as work proceeds.
- Keep equipment and the areas around equipment free of scrap and debris.
- Keep stairways, ramps, and other travel areas clear.
- Secure loose or light material stored on roofs and open floors to keep it from blowing away in the wind.
- Never let material fall from any level of the project.
- In construction, keep material at least 1.8 meters or 6 feet away from floor and roof openings, floor and roof edges, excavations, and trenches.
- Store material so that it won't roll or slide in the direction of the opening. Use blocking if necessary.
- Before handling used lumber, remove or bend over any protruding nails and chip away hardened concrete.
- Remove flammable rubbish and debris immediately from the vicinity of welding, flame cutting, propane heating, and other ignition sources.