

Housekeeping Makes Good Sense



Housekeeping, as defined by OSHA, comes up short far too many times on most jobsites. Poor housekeeping ferments a multiplicity of fall/tripping hazards on jobsites, leading to massive numbers of minor injuries, minor hurts and pains, and massive loss-time across the nation.

In **OSHA 1926 Construction Standards (1926.25 Housekeeping)**, it states as follows:

“During the course of construction, alterations, or repairs, form and scrap lumber with protruding nails, and all other debris, shall be kept cleared from work areas, passageways, and stairs, in and around buildings or other structures.”

So using this OSHA definition of Housekeeping, let’s divide a typical construction jobsite into six major areas:

- (1) Jobsite/General
- (2) Storage Trailer
- (3) Office Trailer
- (4) Equipment
- (5) Storage Year
- (6) Vehicles On-Site

Jobsite/General—Here’s what we see, debris on haul roads, trash containers overflowing, extension cords in aiseways/stairwells, trash fires, dumpsters overflowing, lack of “fire watches”, lack of fire extinguishers, and trash barrels overflowing.

Not a pretty site, with the net result being a potential of OSHA fines totaling well over \$10,000.

Storage Trailer—More of the same housekeeping violations, debris on the floor, chemical spillage, improper combustible storage, batteries on their side, containers not capped, hard hats contaminated, trash cans filled to overflowing, inaccessible storage, body harnesses, slings and lanyards on the floor.

Many of these “housekeeping” hazards are in the **Serious** category, carrying fines starting at \$7,000 each.

Office Trailer—Somewhat of a pattern of OSHA violations, still major serious hazards, such as combustible products stored in trailers, no cups for drinking water, clutter on the floor, OSHA signage not properly wall-mounted, or not posted in clear view of workers, absence of first aid kit, or kit contaminated, or kit lacking necessary items, emergency phone numbers not posted adjacent to trailer phone, fire extinguisher not mounted at eye level, trash cans overflowing.

The OSHA violations for these hazards vary in dollar penalties from \$1,000 to \$7,000. More importantly, however, that all of these housekeeping violations existed on the jobsite’s Superintendent’s/Foreman’s watch.

Equipment (Cab)—Site review indicated that many of the on-site equipment's cabs had housekeeping hazards such as trash on the floor, broken glass in cab windows, broken gauges in cabs, grease on floors of the cabs, or on the hand rails.

Of these hazards, the one needing the most attention was where there was broken glass in the cabs. These are serious violations, carrying a \$7,000 penalty.

Storage Yard—Aisleways are cluttered, no ladders to access storage on top of shelves, fall/tripping hazards, sharp-edged flashing/rebar, scrap lumber with nails exposed, dumpsters overflowing, trash barrels overflowing.

Primary hazard involves scrap lumber with nails exposed, which carries an OSHA penalty of \$7,000. Cluttered aisleways prevent safe worker access to stored materials.

Vehicles-On-Site—Improper parking of workers' vehicles adjacent to fuel storage tanks, refueling tanks, plastic gas cans in the backs of pick-up trucks, blocking of emergency vehicles should they need to access site, blocking of safe access to storage facilities, random leaking of fuel lines and hydraulic fluids from undercarriages of private vehicles.

Question validity of workers' parking private vehicles on construction site, plus blocking of haul roads, etc.

No Smoking On Site Where Combustible Fluids Stored:

Noticeable lack of No Smoking signs required to be posted on-site where major combustible fluids are stored (plus accumulation of other toxic/flammable products are in abundance).
Smoking should be prohibited on all portions of the jobsite.

Housekeeping is partitioned among general contractors and sub-contractors, each of which contributes materially to housekeeping hazards noted throughout this Safety Talk. Daily/weekly clean up is mandatory.