Custodial Safety Guidelines

Environmental Health, Safety, and Risk Management Department

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Revised: September, 2016
PURPOSE: Workplace accidents affect all aspects of the employees' lives and are counterproductive to the employer as well. Safety professionals point out that over half of the accidents are either related directly or indirectly to poor housekeeping practices. It is the intention of the Environmental Health, Safety and Risk Management Depts. (EHSRM) to consult with the Custodial Departments to improve general safety practices and conditions by providing safety training and enforcing safety standards.

SCOPE: It is the intent of this Safety Guide to establish a positive approach to custodial safety by recommending specific Safety Standards to include:

A. Management responsibility
B. Employee responsibility
C. General safety guidelines
D. Materials safety:
   1. Management and supervisory steps
   2. Employee steps
E. Equipment safety
F. Floor Safety:
   1. Management and supervisory steps
   2. Employee Steps
G. Fire Protection

Accident prevention consists of performing every operation, whether large or small, the correct way. It puts into practice the smart and common sense methods of getting the job done.

MANAGEMENT BASIC RESPONSIBILITY:

A. To provide equipment that has been properly procured for optimum safety, equipped with necessary guards, shields, and other safety devices
B. To offer well thought-out guidelines, practices and procedures
C. To train and motivate supervisors and employees in safe operating practices
D. To create an environment that emphasizes proactive safety practices and awareness
E. To provide for safety inspections and condition reports
F. To investigate all accidents in order to assess and prevent recurrence

EMPLOYEE BASIC RESPONSIBILITY:

A. To use the provided equipment safely and properly, including wearing all required personal protective equipment (PPE)
B. Awareness and compliance of all safety policies, guidelines and best practices
C. To be on the lookout for hazardous conditions and report them to your supervisor
D. To caution fellow workers about unsafe conditions or practices

GENERAL SAFETY GUIDELINES:

A. In wet weather, rubber mats or runners should be placed near entrance areas. This will help eliminate dangerous falls and help prevent the tracking of mud and water onto clean floors
B. Submit a work order to address poor vision areas or places with burned out light bulbs in critical areas such as stair landings, near doors, at aisle intersections, etc.

C. Watch out for vehicles

D. Report any accident no matter how insignificant it seems (i.e. cut finger, banged knee, etc.) to your immediate supervisor who will then submit the information on the Accident/Injury 24 hour Quick Link on the EHSRM website

E. Lift heavy objects the proper way and in accordance with the Safety training. Keep your knees bent and your back straight. Always get help when necessary

F. Horseplay can cause serious injuries and is NOT covered by Worker’s Compensation

G. Report safety hazards and any recommendations for improvement to your supervisor

H. Be sure to pay attention to all safety signs and notices. They are there for your protection

I. When navigating stairs, look down to see where your footing is, watch your step and use the handrail

J. When emptying waste receptacles, throw the contents out rather than reaching in

K. Disconnect fans and other electrical equipment from the electrical outlet before cleaning them. Pull on the plug, do not yank on the cord

L. Don't take chances with yours or others safety. In any suspicious or uncertain situation check with your supervisor

MATERIALS SAFETY:

A. Management and Supervisory Steps:
   1. Poisonous materials or chemicals shall be marked and controlled. Only designated specially trained personnel should handle hazardous or poisonous materials
   2. Materials in plastic containers should be purchased wherever possible to avoid the hazards of broken glass
   3. Chemical and hazardous storage containers or sheds should be provided to house hazardous or combustible materials
   4. Wherever possible, caustic or acidic products should be replaced by neutral or milder products

B. Employee Steps:
   1. Use all solvents in well-ventilated areas. Replace the cap on all solvent containers after each use
   2. If any liquid gets in your eyes, even just dirty water, immediately flush the eyes with water
   3. Keep all PPE that has been provided in good condition and wear it whenever necessary
   4. Flammable liquids shall be stored in a flammable resistant storage cabinet or designated area
   5. Strong scented chemicals should be used in a well ventilated area and the skin should be covered to protect against chemical irritation
   6. Do not put hands around the face or mouth after handling chemicals. Wash and dry hands thoroughly after handling chemicals.
   7. If it is necessary to dilute an acid, be sure to POUR THE ACID INTO THE WATER. This will help prevent the acid from splashing onto you.
EQUIPMENT SAFETY: These guidelines pertain to the use of housekeeping equipment and the general use and cleaning of other types of equipment.

A. Be aware of how you carry your equipment, mops, brooms etc. so that no one is injured by protruding handles.
B. When cleaning aisles or stairs, place buckets and equipment away from heavy traffic areas to prevent falls and clearly mark or barricade the surrounding wet areas to protect passersby from slips, trips or falls.
C. Maintenance areas should be kept neat and organized.
D. Inspect and maintain equipment regularly. Put in a work order to repair or replace any frayed cords or damaged equipment.
E. Ladders should be kept in good repair and properly used.
F. Be sure that switches on electrical equipment are in the off position BEFORE plugging in the appliance.
G. Greasy or oily cloths and dust mops shall be kept in APPROVED METAL CONTAINERS.
H. Floor buffing machine handles should be in the lowered position before starting them.
I. Floor buffing machine brushes and attachment plates should be manually secured to the machine before the motor is turned on.
J. Pull only the length of electrical cord needed.
K. Loose clothing or jewelry should never be worn around moving parts of machinery or when plugging into an electrical socket.
L. Use the right tools for the job.

FLOOR SAFETY: Most rules concerning floor safety are directed to preventing slips, trips and falls. These types of accidents can be very painful and dangerous and it is better to be proactive and cautious than to have an injury due to lack of attention and demarcation of the cleaning area.

A. Management and Supervisory Steps:
   1. If possible floors and stairways should be designed to have an anti-slip surface.
   2. Existing slippery surfaces should be corrected with entry rugs or an application of an anti-slip surface.
   3. Work orders should be submitted for worn or damaged floors to be quickly addressed. This includes loose or curled tiles, holes, cracks, etc.
   4. Carpets should be kept in good repair, damaged carpets and rugs need to be removed and replaced as soon as possible. A non-slip pad should be used under small rugs.
   5. In case of a spill that causes a slip hazard, the employee should post cones and danger signs around the area and immediately clean it up.
   6. If possible, purchasing slip resistant floor finishes, waxes, and coatings should be the first consideration for all floors.
   7. In the event of an icy floor or sidewalk, the snow should be shoveled away and salt or an ice melting product should be spread on the icy areas to quickly create a safe walking path.
B. Employee Steps:
1. "Wet Floor" caution signs should be used whenever floors are wet, cleaned, waxed, sealed or stripped. Signs should be placed so they are clearly visible from all angles of approach.
2. Rain, snow or other liquids should be mopped up immediately to dry the floor.
3. Floors should be cleaned and dried regularly to remove slipping hazards.
4. Most natural soaps leave a slippery film on floors and should be avoided in the floor cleaning process.
5. When working on a wet floor, walk carefully and take shorter more cautious steps than usual.
6. Mats and runners should lay flat. Wrinkles or turned-up corners are tripping hazards.
7. Defective flooring, loose handrails, bad stair treads, etc. should be reported to your supervisor and a work order be submitted.

FIRE SAFETY: Fires are considered as a special class of accident. An examination of fire reports indicates that improper handling of combustible materials and ignition sources causes a large number of fires.
A. Storage of any USELESS materials, from rags, rubbish, waste paper, and wood to obsolete flammable materials is prohibited and should be disposed of immediately.
B. Proper and regular disposal of waste products is essential for good fire prevention.
C. Many cleaning compounds, polishes, etc. contains flammable solvents. Such materials should be handled in accordance with the manufacturers specifications.
D. Before any product is used the properties of the product should be identified so that proper precautions may be taken while handling the product.