



MAFES Dawg Tracks

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Messy Workplaces aren't Safe Havens



It's always good to visit the different areas in our university system to see the units that are clean, orderly and well organized. During planting, growing and harvest seasons we like to see the fields, pastures and fence rows clean and end rows kept neat. This portrays a positive image for everyone involved, especially outside guests and University executive staff members. It shows that the employees of those areas take pride in their workplace for the physical appearance and the enhancement of safety that it portrays.

Not only in our system, but in the past, in my prior world, when we offered extra incentives for "Clean Awards," the competition was intense on trying to win this award. You know, we spend 30% of our time at our locations of work with this in mind. It behooves us to endeavor to keep our areas as clean and organized as we would our home places.

Following are some tips that we can use as "heads up" and reminders that will enhance the looks and safety of our areas:

TIPS FOR GOOD HOUSEKEEPING PRACTICES-

- **Keep shop and office areas clear of clutter and items that cause disarray-** In our stations- maintain a cleaning program for shop floors, workbenches, etc. and in offices- maintain a program for keeping our office clean, organized and free of "clutter." This includes stacks of periodicals on desks and tables, which not only is a negative trait of housekeeping, but lends the potential for trip and fall hazards, as well as fire hazards. It is easy to enter a station office or maintenance shop and observe that some areas are clean and orderly, (where pride and self- esteem for their area is evident), and in the same station other areas are embarrassing for their condition. Clean and orderly offices and shops are no guarantee that it is totally safe, but dirty, unclean and disorganization in the areas is definitely a haven for potential accidents.
- **Maintain clear aisles, walkways and unobstructed exits and entrances-** This will reduce the potential for trip and fall hazards. Slips, trips and falls are one of the leading causes of injury or death in the agriculture industry.
- **Keep floors dry and in good repair-** Torn carpet, broken tile, and broken concrete are all prime targets for slip, trip or fall hazards. Keep signage in place for wet floors to reduce the potential for a slip and fall.
- **Set up a schedule for regular maintenance of high profile areas where dirt, debris and dust are prevalent-** All three of these culprits can cause problems with people and equipment, besides casting dark shadows on the personality of the installation, whether it be an office, maintenance shop or other types of facilities.

- **Keep tools and parts organized for easy access-** This not only will make the task go faster by being able to put your hands on the correct tools or parts, but it also will show good organization of the area.
- **Use proper waste containers-** Designated containers for the various types of debris and scrap will be beneficial in removing the different types. You don't want to have paper and cardboard mixed with oily rags and contaminated oil - absorbent or scrap wood and metal mixed in the same container.
- **Keep sprinkler systems, fire extinguishers, and fire alarms free with easy access-** Sprinkler systems must have 18 inches clearance from the top of a stack in a sprinkled building and 24 inches in a non-sprinkled building. Fire extinguishers must have at least 3 feet clearance in all directions for easy access and they should not be used for coat or garment hangers. Fire alarm systems must be clear of any obstructions for easy access.
- **Keep oil spills and leaks cleaned up to prevent the chance of a slip or fall-** In addition to the prevention of slips or falls, keeping them clean will eliminate the opportunity for sparks from a welder or cutting torch igniting a fire.
- **Keep sufficient and proper lighting in all work areas-** Proper lighting in all areas, whether it is in a shop or office, makes the jobs go faster and easier as the eye strain is less fatiguing and the job quality will be better due to the adequate lighting.
- **Maintain or repair defective tools and equipment-** Defective tools are only a step or two different in using the wrong type of tool. Both can get you in trouble with the potential for an injury. When you find a defective tool, report it to your supervisor and take it out of service. You should never attempt to use a defective tool.

Good housekeeping and a sound maintenance program usually results in a morale booster. Eventually, the work force will pick up on the program and pride in their status will surface.

Guests, other university visitors and upper management making positive comments will enhance this pride.

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A HOSPITAL TRIP**

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RESPONSIBILITY**