



# Safety Scene

## Housekeeping: Your Simple Key to Safety

by Molly E. Butz

Why good "facility-keeping" should be on your list of New Year's resolutions!



In a component manufacturing facility it can be very easy to let work areas become cluttered, poorly maintained or unorganized. Maintaining equipment, keeping up production numbers and other business activities can make a task like housekeeping easily slip to the back of the to-do list. However, good housekeeping is one of the easiest ways to promote safety, productivity and morale.

It's important to recognize that housekeeping goes beyond simple cleaning. Sure, there is a certain amount of sweeping, vacuuming, picking up, etc. that needs to be done, but housekeeping at a component manufacturing facility is more involved. The basis for a good program is keeping all work areas neat and organized.

In the office areas, this includes:

- Keeping phone lines, network cables and electrical cords up off of the ground or tucked away under cord covers.
- Designating filing/storage areas to keep desks from getting out-of-control.
- Closing all drawers and filing cabinets.
- Regularly tidying common areas (lunch room, bathrooms, etc.).

### The benefits of keeping a clean work area range from financial savings to employee morale.

In the production areas, this includes:

- Keeping aisles/walkways clean and free from clutter.
- Putting tools away in designated storage areas.
- Defining and maintaining supply storage areas.
- Closing cabinet doors and drawers.
- Reporting and removing potential hazards.
- Evaluating general workspace layout for organization and efficiency.

And although many of these items may seem insignificant, they each contribute to a safer, more efficient workplace.

#### Neatness Not Just for Show

"The benefits of keeping a clean work area range from financial savings to employee morale," says Ralph Broughton, Safety Coordinator, Total Building Services Group, Marietta, GA. "[Good housekeeping] adds value to our company," Ralph adds. How? Read on.

Put simply, clutter and mess can lead to workplace accidents and decreased efficiency. Random tools, disorderly supplies and wet or greasy spills cause tripping and slipping hazards. And let's face it, weaving your way through unkempt aisles and storage areas will slow you down and keep you from getting back to the production line easily. That can end up meaning lost time, money and lower employee morale.

"Accidents are more expensive than most people realize," Ralph tells *SBC Magazine*. "But, a well-managed and clean [production area] can significantly reduce the cost associated with accidents by preventing the accident from happening." In addition, keeping the clutter under control can also help maintain effective

material handling, lower fire risks, and lessen tool/equipment damage and loss.

#### Taking Responsibility

It's a new year and a great time to get your component manufacturing plant in shape with a ramped-up housekeeping program. But what makes a housekeeping program "good," you ask? When Gerald Macon, Safety Coordinator at Spenard Builders Supply in Anchorage, AK overhauled his housekeeping program, he began by "making every individual responsible for his/her area. We never let the plant get out-of-control messy." Gerald recommends this kind of delegation of responsibilities to save time. Now, his production crew never has to spend half a day cleaning and can focus more time on building components. (See "Housekeeping During Shift Operations" case study for more tips.)

While you're planning your updated housekeeping program, do a walk-through of each area in your production facility and note the places you need new or improved storage cabinets or shelving. Ensure that, where it makes sense, your storage is separated from your work areas to keep materials swiftly moving through your plant. It's also important to add good housekeeping to your list of safety training topics and spend time working with your employees on their responsibilities.

Clutter control can help your office staff work more efficiently as well. A recent survey conducted by CableOrganizer.com

### A Note from the Insurance Expert

"Poor housekeeping usually leads to poor loss experience because it increases risk exposure," says Richard Langton, Wood Products Insurance Manager for Bowermaster & Associates. "Specifically, poor housekeeping increases the risk to property, especially when it comes to sawdust. Many fires have been fueled by the build up of wood dust or shavings."

To reduce the risk of fire at your component manufacturing facility, Richard recommends:

- Controlling and cleaning up wood dust daily
- Storing all combustibles in their designated "safe area" away from dust/debris
- Replacing all frayed electrical cords and poorly maintained electrical outlets
- Enforcing a "No Smoking Policy" in all work areas

Add these fire-related housekeeping tasks to your daily drill and decrease your risk exposure today!

found that 30 percent of the business professionals that responded admitted their work space was so cluttered that it "hindered productivity." Applying the same housekeeping concepts to your production and office areas will help elimi-

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#### at a glance

- The basis for a good safety program is keeping work areas neat and organized.
- A clean production area can significantly reduce the cost of accidents by preventing them.
- Create a daily housekeeping checklist to confirm that attention is given to specific areas of your operation—both the plant and the office.

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## CASE STUDY: Housekeeping During Shift Operations

When Paul Beaumont took on the role of Safety Coordinator at Sun State Components in Kingman, AZ, he decided to take some time upfront to get a handle on the injuries occurring in his facility so that he could focus his safety training on specific areas in an effort to reduce accidents.

"As it turned out after doing some analysis," Paul explained, "one of those areas that could reduce injuries was housekeeping, specifically, housekeeping during shift operations." Paul found that, in addition to the general clean-ups at the end of each shift, continual clean-up while the crew was working helped reduce his injury reports.

Here's why: a review of the prior 18 months of accidents that had been reported uncovered lacerations/punctures and back strains as the most commonly reported injuries. For Paul, addressing strains with focused proper lifting training was straight forward. As for the laceration/puncture injuries, isolating the cause(s) was a little more difficult.

After spending some time doing a little detective work, Paul found that during shift operations he "noticed metal plates, nails and metal banding debris scattered everywhere." He knew the metal plates and loose nails created a hazard, but while investigating, he also became aware that when stepped on, the loose straps of metal banding could easily flip-up and hit the shin/leg, causing serious lacerations.

Once he knew the cause, the answer was simple: good housekeeping. "To reduce the potential risks associated with laceration and puncture injuries," Paul concluded, "our supervisors have made our workforce more aware of debris with an emphasis on removing metal plates, nails, metal banding and even saw dust during shift operations, rather than just the end of the shift clean-ups."

Now Sun State is well on its way to reduced accidents and injuries with a renewed focus and a good housekeeping program!

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nate distractions, heighten focus and maximize productivity. In addition, consider using all of the helpful housekeeping tools in WTCA's Operation Safety program; this way you can be proactive about untidiness instead of reactive.

Lastly, add a housekeeping checklist to your daily routine. This can be a simple paper and pencil system or a more involved procedure, whichever works for you. (See "Digital Housekeeping," April 2005, *SBC Magazine*.) No matter which method you choose, this is a critical final step in creating and maintaining your successful housekeeping program. A daily checklist will give you the opportunity to confirm that the program is effective and provides a check to make sure your team fixes problems as quickly as they arise. (Download a simple housekeeping checklist from [Support Docs](#) at [www.sbcmag.info](http://www.sbcmag.info).)

"As everyone knows a clean work area is a safe work area," says Ralph. He should know. A renewed focus on safety through improved housekeeping performance, among other things, has saved Total Building Services Group an estimated \$30,000 this year. Keeping your facility in good shape is easy and one of the most straightforward ways to keep your numbers up, accidents to a minimum, and your employees feeling, thinking and working better. Safety first! **SBC**

To pose a question for this column or to learn more about WTCA's Operation Safety Program, contact WTCA Staff at 608/274-4849, email [wta@sbcindustry.com](mailto:wta@sbcindustry.com), or view the Operation Safety demonstration online at [www.wtcalco.com](http://www.wtcalco.com).



## Simpson Strong-Tie Showcases New Possibilities at BCMC



There was much to be discovered at Simpson Strong-Tie's BCMC booth this year with several new and expanded products for the Component Industry. Visitors to the booth saw first hand how these products offer new possibilities for building faster, safer or more cost effectively.

"The BCMC Show is a highlight for us every year," said Tawn Simons, National Manager for the Engineered Wood Industry at Simpson Strong-Tie. "It's the perfect opportunity to showcase our new products and applications for the coming year, giving attendees a sneak preview of what's ahead. In addition we also enjoy networking with our valued customers and industry leaders at the Show and this year was no different. Even with the slowed building economy, the quality of attendees made the Show a big success. We already look forward to next year's BCMC in Denver!"

### A few of the products Simpson Strong-Tie showcased at BCMC were:

#### Quik Drive® Systems for Girder Attachments

Live demonstrations allowed BCMC attendees to experience how fast, easy and safe it is to use Quik Drive Auto-Feed Systems for attaching 2-ply and 3-ply girders. The holding power of Quik Drive screws—a stronger, safer alternative to collated nails—can improve the strength and quality of the girder.

#### THJU Hip/Jack Hanger

Simpson-Strong-Tie's new U-shaped hip/jack hanger offers the most flexibility and ease of installation without sacrificing performance. Available in two standard sizes and in a range of intermediate widths, THJU series hangers can accommodate hip skews up to 65 degrees and various single- and two-ply hip/jack combinations.

#### Steel Strong-Wall® Shearwalls

Simpson's booth reached new heights this year thanks in part to its new Steel Strong-Wall shearwalls for two-story stacked and balloon framing applications.

If you missed BCMC or would like more information about Simpson Strong-Tie products, visit [www.strongtie.com](http://www.strongtie.com).

#### Thank You!

Simpson would like to thank Stark Truss, Contract Building Components and Contract Framing for helping make the Simpson Strong-Tie booth, and the show, so successful!



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