

Agilus Health & Safety Bulletin

Cleanliness in Shared Workspaces

April 2024

The Importance of Good Housekeeping

According to the Canadian Centre of Health & Safety, every person employed in Canada has the right to a safe work environment. To ensure this, in each jurisdiction, the Occupational Health and Safety Act (or equivalent) is based on the Internal Responsibility System (IRS). IRS requires that everyone at or associated with the workplace takes responsibility for their own health and safety and the health and safety of those around them. This responsibility includes employers, employees, owners, contractors, sub-contractors, contracting employers, and suppliers.

You play an important role in prioritizing safety, safeguarding yourself, respecting others' safety, understanding your rights, and actively participating in preventative measures.

In this month's newsletter, we are highlighting some essential tips and reminders for good housekeeping in the workplace. Whether you are a full-time or part-time employee, or on contract, you still have the responsibility to keep your workspace and common areas clean.



On average, a person spends about 90,000 hours at work over a lifetime. This means your work environment can have a significant impact on your life, mentally and physically. Working in a safe and clean environment is not only paramount to leading a healthy and productive work life – it's the law.

Maintaining Cleanliness and Good Hygiene in Shared Workspaces

Research indicates that you collect more than a paycheck at work: Every time you touch your desk, keyboard, or telephone, you pick up germs. More than 10 million bacteria are on a typical office desk – 400 times more bacteria than found on the average toilet seat – which means that typing an email or making a call puts you at risk for illnesses. Being mindful of and following regular cleaning and sanitizing practices is thus indispensable.

Here are some tips to ensure you and your colleagues are working in a safe and healthy environment:

1. Regular Cleaning Schedule:

Establishing a consistent cleaning routine can keep your workspace germ-free.

- Most offices have a dedicated cleaning crew to ensure that spaces are cleaned regularly. However, it is still important to clean your own desk and devices you use, even if you aren't sharing them with anyone.
- High traffic places such as hallways, lunchrooms, and desks must be cleaned regularly. Communal areas must be regularly sanitized with disinfectant wipes or sprays to prevent bacteria build up.
- If you are using a common lunchroom, make sure to use your own cutlery and plates or freshly washed and sanitized ones.
- Ensure regular maintenance and cleaning are completed on water dispensers and coffee machines.



2. Proper Waste Disposal:

Proper waste disposal can not only eliminate the possibility of illness but is also critical to ensure environmental sustainability and maintaining a clean and safe work environment. Improper waste disposal can lead to odours, spread of germs, emission of hazardous gas and in extreme cases, fire.

- Proper waste handling must be adhered to depending on the type of waste you are disposing. In case of any questions reach out to your Health & Safety personnel.
- Dispose of regular waste using designated bins for recycling, general waste, and organic waste. Avoid cluttering your desks with unnecessary items and dispose off food waste promptly.
- Minimise the use of single use items and promote sustainability to reduce waste.



3. Personal Hygiene Practices:

When working in a shared workspace, maintaining high standards of personal hygiene is extremely crucial to ensure the health and safety of yourself and others working in the vicinity.

- When using shared devices and machines, clean them regularly after each use. Wear protective gear such as gloves, mask etc., to limit skin exposure.
- Remember to wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using shared facilities like restrooms or kitchen areas.



4. Ventilation and Air Quality:

Good indoor air quality is vital for a healthy workspace environment.

- Where possible, ensure that windows are opened regularly to allow fresh air circulation or consider using air purifiers to improve air quality indoors.
- If you are working on machines that are prone to emissions or releasing fumes, make sure you are in a well-ventilated area and using the appropriate PPE for the work.
- You can also invest in air purifying plants such as Snake Plant, Peace lily, Aloe Vera etc., for your desk to improve the quality of air around you.



5. Educational Resources:

Keep up-to-date with educational resources about the importance of cleanliness and housekeeping in the workplace like these:

- [Canadian Centre for Occupational Health & Safety: Workplace Housekeeping](#)
- Reach out to your supervisors if you are unsure of cleanliness protocols, want to report an incident or have questions.
- Be aware of the cleaning chemicals your workplace uses and ensure that you know where the SDS Sheets are. Proactively read the usage and safety instructions just in case. Recommend options that are less corrosive, biologically friendly and scent-free.



Clutter is Only a Step Away from a Trip

One important aspect of good housekeeping is a clutter-free space.

Whether you are working at a desk, a shared office, a warehouse or a plant site, clearing clutter is an important element in preventing yourself and others from trips, cuts and injuries of all kinds.

DID YOU KNOW?

Slips, Trips and Falls are one of the most common workplace accidents in Canada and cost millions of dollars in lost time and productivity.

- Remove items that are not used regularly and place them in designated storage spaces.
- Keep your common spaces and hallways clear for easy and safe access.
- Make sure items that are stored on shelves or stacked are secured firmly to prevent them from falling and causing injury.

Clutter can cause people to experience anxiety, claustrophobia, negativity and hinder productivity. Remember a clutter-free space helps productivity.

Scent-sible Solutions for a Fragrance-Free Workplace

Whether your workplace has a scent-free designation or not, strong odours can impact the health and productivity of your colleagues. Its not just perfumes, but also smells and odours from sanitizers, soaps, lotions, food items etc., that can have an impact on the health and safety of people who are sensitive to smells.

- Help reduce exposure to scented products by being conscious of the choice of products you use (opt for non-scented) and refrain from wearing fragrances and colognes to the workplace.
- Avoid use of highly scented cleaning products, perfumes, and disinfectants in close spaces as they can compromise on the health and safety for people who are sensitive to smells.

Every individual bears responsibility in preventing job-related illnesses and injuries. Maintaining cleanliness and hygiene is a collective effort. Encourage and support your colleagues to take responsibility for their actions and contribute to keeping the workspace clean and safe for everyone.

Clean Work Space = Safe Work Place.

Have questions regarding this bulletin, or workplace health and safety?

Contact us at: safety@agilus.ca

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