

# How to Create a Clean Workplace Policy



The word “housekeeping” summons up images of maids and parents scolding kids for leaving their socks on the floor. “Sanitation” and “hygiene” sound weightier but are equally unlikely to resonate with your average employee. But while finding the suitable word may be a challenge, the concept itself is crucial. In addition to being an OHS requirement, maintaining a clean workplace is imperative to safety, productivity and profitability because it minimizes fire hazards; slip, trip and fall hazards; struck-by injury risks; falling object injury risks, and exposure to airborne hazards and dusts. Further, clean workplaces maximize efficient use of working space; efficient storage; efficient pathways for materials and personnel; eases maintenance and cleaning costs; improves quality of indoor environmental conditions.

## **10 Things to Include in a Clean Workplace Policy**

It’s imperative to design your clean workplace policy around the unique characteristics of your site in terms of physical space, operations, materials handled, equipment used, etc. But while a one-size-fits-all policy won’t do, there are 10 best practices of what to include in your own policy.

### **1. Statement of Purpose**

Start by describing the purpose of the policy, namely, to establish clear standards and rules to ensure that the workplace is kept in a safe, neat, sanitary and orderly condition at all times.

### **2. Policy Statement**

A strong policy statement can help you “sell” the policy to employees by explaining what they get out of keeping the workplace clean, namely, the chance to do their job safely and efficiently. Conversely, describe the bad things that can result from poor housekeeping, including higher risk of injury and illness.

### **3. Definition of “Housekeeping”**

Keeping in mind the context and negative associations that the word may conjure up, specifically define what “housekeeping” is. Make it clear that you’re talking not just about cleanliness but a regular, proactive discipline dedicated to keeping work areas neat, orderly and free of hazards for the purposes of protecting health and safety.

## **4. Workers Your Policy Is Designed to Protect**

Make it clear that the policy is designed to protect any and all workers who have a stake in ensuring that the workplace is kept safe, clean, neat, orderly and free of hazards, including not just your own company's full- and part-time employees but all workers who work at your site, including temps, contract labourers, volunteers, interns and workers employed by your company's contractors and subcontractors.

## **5. Roles & Responsibilities**

List the housekeeping-related roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders under your policy, including at a minimum.

- Company owners, officers, directors and other principals, who would be considered "employers" under OHS laws;
- The OHS coordinator or other individual in charge of running your company's health and safety program;
- Supervisors, foremen, lead-hands, etc.; and

## **6. General Housekeeping Standards**

Now we come to the heart of the policy, the actual cleaning standards you want maintained in the workplace, which should include:

- Vacuuming, cleaning and removal of dirt and debris from floors, working surfaces, stairways, passages, platforms, entrances and exits;
- Keeping the above areas dry, clean and free of clutter, obstructions and tripping hazards;
- Cleaning and maintenance of eating and other work areas;
- When and how often different work areas are checked and by whom;
- Stacking, piling, shelving and storage of different materials;
- Checking mats, pads, rugs, and other items on the floor for ripples, curling and other tripping hazards;
- Keeping fire exits, fire alarms, pull stations, hose cabinets and fire extinguishers free of obstructions so they're readily accessible at all times;
- Indoor and outdoor lighting;
- Keeping outdoor areas, entries and exits dry and free of snow and ice accumulations;
- Spill control and cleanup procedures;
- Waste disposal measures;
- Inspection, maintenance and servicing of tools and equipment;
- Inspection procedures and schedules; and
- Implementation of repairs, equipment removals and other corrective actions.

## **7. Indoor Smoking Ban**

You're legally required to ban smoking and vaping in:

- Enclosed spaces where employees work;
- Eating areas, washrooms and restrooms;
- Adjacent corridors, lobbies, stairwells, elevators, escalators and other common areas frequented by employees; and
- Company vehicles and other vehicles carrying at least one passenger.

The policy should also require posting of No Smoking signs and removal of ashtrays and other smoking receptacles in areas where smoking is banned.

## **8. Requirements for Contractors & Subcontractors**

Include provisions requiring contractors and subcontractors at your site to comply with your clean workplace requirements.

## **9. Training**

State that you will provide education and training to all affected employees to ensure they understand and are qualified to carry out their responsibilities under the policy.

## **10. Monitoring**

Finally, indicate that you will evaluate your cleaning practices during the monthly workplace inspection and in the course of regular job observations. You should also review the policy at least once a year and on an immediate basis in response to significant changes in work circumstances or conditions and/or incidents and other red flags suggesting that the policy isn't working and needs to be reviewed. You may have to perform such review in consultation with the workplace safety committee or representative, depending on your jurisdiction's OHS laws.