

Good Housekeeping

As we prepare for an extended period away from campus during the winter holidays, now is a great time to think about housekeeping. Aside from helping to keep track of your equipment, tools, and materials, maintaining a tidy work area can prevent many unnecessary hazards in the workplace, such as:

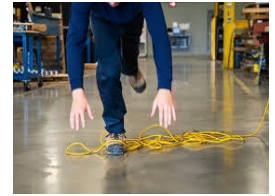
- **Slips, trips, and falls** can result from liquids, misplaced cables, and other items in walking paths and work areas.
- **Falling objects** from poorly stored tools and materials on shelves can lead to head, eye, and other injuries.
- **Flammable products**, such as paint thinners, gasoline, or alcohols that are not properly stored in flammable storage cabinets can increase the risk and severity of fires. Refer to Northwestern's [Fire Prevention Program](#) for more information.
- **Improperly stored materials**, such as cardboard boxes, paper, plastic, pallets, tools, and equipment can create unsafe fire loads and block evacuation routes, first aid kits, emergency eye wash stations and showers, and fire safety equipment.
- **Food and drinks** left in work areas can attract rodents, insects, and other pests.

Prevent slips and trips, use these housekeeping tips!

- Establish a regular housekeeping routine or checklist in your work area.
- Immediately clean up spills, continuously clean up as you work, and remove waste and unneeded materials from your work area daily.
- Plan your work ahead of time to avoid bringing unnecessary tools and equipment to the worksite.
- Keep walkways clear of cables, materials, tools, equipment, and any other trip or egress hazards. Use cable covers or wall clips when cables must pass through work or public areas.
- Make sure any hazardous products in your work area, such as paints, adhesives, and solvents, are appropriately labeled, stored, and disposed of according to the product's Safety Data Sheet (SDS) and Northwestern's [Hazard Communication Program](#).
- If you observe a housekeeping issue that you are not equipped or trained to address, inform your supervisor and others in the work area.

Report all injuries [online](#) or call (847) 491-5582.

Learn more about good housekeeping practices from the [National Safety Council \(NSC\)](#)



Misplaced cables



Blocked fire exit



Cable covers



Flammable storage cabinet

Tips for Success When Talking to Your Team

Preparation is Key: Be aware of hazards in your work area and plan work accordingly. Establish a regular housekeeping routine for your work area. Work with your team to review housekeeping issues in your work area and discuss how housekeeping practices can be improved.

Stay Positive: Keep the focus on what can be done to create a safe workplace instead of focusing on what has gone wrong in the past.

Share a Story, Ask for a Story: Storytelling is a powerful method to convey information. Stories from your employees make the topic even more relatable.

Added Benefits of Good Housekeeping

- A tidier work area can improve morale and productivity.
- Keeping materials and tools organized makes it easier to find items and keep track of your inventory.
- Greater attention to the state of your work area makes it easier to identify other potential hazards.
- Keeping your work area clean shows pride in your workplace and respect for your colleagues.

For Additional Information Contact Environmental Health & Safety at ehs@northwestern.edu

Do you or your team have a safety story you'd like to share? Contact Environmental Health and Safety for details.