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Organization of Work Areas

The way we set up our work areas makes a significant impact on our ability to work safely as well as efficiently.

All too often, our work areas are set up and not changed for extended periods of time, even when a rearrangement would be a significant improvement.

Complacency often plays a factor in why our work areas are not changed for the better.

Taking the time to evaluate your work areas as well as taking action to eliminate hazards can prevent an injury from occurring.

Common Hazards of Work Areas with Poor Organization:

Not only is productivity affected when there is poor organization of a work area, there can also be great safety risks. Some common hazards of poorly organized work areas include:

- Trip hazards - Trips are a common cause of injuries at work. Objects on the floor, objects hanging from shelves, and uneven ground are just a few common examples of trip hazards in the workplace.
- Sprain/ Strain hazards - Poor foresight or carelessness often leads to heavy or awkward objects being left on the floor or in a space that makes it difficult for someone to lift them up. These situations put individuals at risk for sprain and strain injuries which are some of the most common and costly injuries that occur in the workplace.
- Overhead hazards - Poor organization leads to objects being hastily thrown on overhead shelves which leads to dropped object hazards as well as a struck-by hazard for someone working in the area.
- Risks to property - When items are left everywhere or in the line of fire, damage to tools, equipment, or materials often occurs.

Work Area Organization Best Practices:

- Maintain clean and clear walkways through a work area. Always have proper space for tools, materials, and equipment to avoid creating trip hazards as well as preventing property damage incidents. Never allow excess materials to take up space in walkways or in the path of forklifts.
- Always store heavy or awkward objects where they are easily accessible to be lifted, preferably by a piece of equipment such as a forklift when possible. Always think of the next person who may have to lift an object. It may be in a spot that creates an easy and safe lift for you but could create a hazard for someone who is shorter than you.
- Never place objects that are improperly staged overhead, especially when moving equipment is in the area. A 10 lb. object stored on a high shelf can cause a significant injury to someone below if it falls off.
- Never have objects or materials hanging overhead where someone could walk into them.

Summary:

Take time to evaluate your work areas today.

How long have they been organized in their current state?

Is there a better way to set up a certain area?

Were they better organized at one time and now they are not up to par?

Think about how rearranging certain things can lead to fewer hazards as well as create a more pleasant place to work in general.