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## **Four Focus Items for Work Area Inspections**

Work area inspections are an important basic safe work practice that should be done before beginning a task. In general industry, there are many work areas that remain the same day in and day out. On the other hand, there are areas that we work in that are constantly changing.

No matter if we are in the same work area that does not change much every day or if we work in one that is constantly changing, it is important to do a thorough inspection of it. There are common hazards that affect virtually every workplace in a manufacturing setting. Four focus items to look at today before beginning work are the condition of tools, organization of work areas, trip hazards, and hand hazards.

### **Four Focus Items for Today's Work Area Inspection**

1. **Tool condition-** Hand tools are constantly being used during work tasks, and over time they are bound to take some abuse. Often times many tools are used way past their life cycle. When tools are used despite being broken or not functioning correctly, injuries can happen. Inspect all hand tools for broken handles, chipping, bending, or just improper functioning in general.
2. **Organization of work area-** The way we have a work area setup often does not change much, even when there are better ways that it could be organized. Complacency often sets in when it comes to how we choose to organize tools, materials, and equipment. Take an honest look at how your work area is set up. Are there overhead hazards? Are heavy objects that need to be lifted from the floor repeatedly? Are important parts or materials getting dirty or damaged from where they are placed? Think outside the box and evaluate how changes or a rearrangement of a work area can make it a safer and more efficient place to work.
3. **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. Trip hazards are some of the easiest hazards to completely eliminate from our work areas.

4. Hand hazards- According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, over 1 million workers are treated in the emergency room for hand injuries each year. Some common types of injuries to our hands include burns, cuts, crushed-by, and fractures. Hazards that cause these injuries can be found virtually anywhere in our workplaces.

Pinch points, moving parts, unguarded equipment, hot surfaces, dropped objects, etc., are all hazards that should be looked at when addressing hand hazards during a work area inspection.

Summary:

These four focus items are just a small list of possible items you should pay attention to when identifying and mitigating hazards during a work area inspection.

Pay attention to these four focus items specifically today. It is often what we consider small things or small hazards that cause the majority of injuries.

Avoid complacency when it comes to addressing any hazard in your work areas.