Construction housekeeping toolbox talk

29 CFR 1926.252, 1926.250, 1926.25, 1926.416, 1926.34, 1926.1153

Date _____ Trainer _____ Location _____

Opening question

If we had to get everyone out of this building right now, what would people trip over on the way?

Why it matters

On a construction site the mess changes by the hour as trades cut, strip, unpack and move on. Scrap with nails, loose cords, debris piles and shaky stacks cause trips, punctures and struck-by injuries, and piles of scrap feed fires. Clutter also blocks stairs and exits right when people need them most.

Key points

1 Clean as you go

During construction, form and scrap lumber with protruding nails and all other debris must be kept cleared from work areas, passageways and stairs (29 CFR 1926.25(a)). Scrap lumber, waste material and rubbish must be removed from the immediate work area as the work progresses. Do not save it for a Friday cleanup. Mist concrete or masonry dust before you sweep it, or use a HEPA vacuum, since dry sweeping can put silica in the air (29 CFR 1926.1153(f)(1)).

29 CFR 1926.252(c)

2 Pull the nails

A nail sticking up out of a board can go through a boot sole or tear open a hand. Used lumber must have all nails withdrawn before it is stacked. When you strip forms, pull or bend over the nails in scrap right away, and never leave nail-studded boards where people walk.

29 CFR 1926.250(b)(8)(i)

3 Use the right containers

Containers must be provided for collecting and separating waste, trash, oily and used rags and other refuse. Containers for garbage and oily, flammable or hazardous waste need covers, and garbage and other waste must be disposed of at frequent and regular intervals. Solvent waste, oily rags and flammable liquids must be kept in fire resistant covered containers until they leave the site (29 CFR 1926.252(e)).

29 CFR 1926.25(c)

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4 Get debris down safely

Debris tossed off an upper floor can hit someone below. When materials are dropped more than 20 feet to any point outside the exterior walls of the building, an enclosed chute must be used. When debris is dropped through floor holes without a chute, the landing area must be completely enclosed with barricades at least 42 inches high and at least 6 feet back from the projected edge of the opening above, with warning signs at each level (29 CFR 1926.252(b)). Nobody clears that lower area until debris handling stops above.

29 CFR 1926.252(a)

5 Stack it so it stays put

Materials stored in tiers must be stacked, racked, blocked, interlocked or otherwise secured so they cannot slide, fall or collapse. Inside a building under construction, do not store material within 6 feet of a hoistway or floor opening, or within 10 feet of an exterior wall that does not extend above the top of the material (29 CFR 1926.250(b)(1)). Keep aisles and passageways clear and in good repair (29 CFR 1926.250(a)(3)).

29 CFR 1926.250(a)(1)

6 Keep cords, walkways and exits clear

Working spaces, walkways and similar locations must be kept clear of cords so they do not create a hazard. Run cords and hoses overhead or along walls where you can. Exits and the routes to them must be kept free of all obstructions so they can be used instantly in a fire or other emergency (29 CFR 1926.34(c)). Report burned-out temporary lights, because nobody can avoid a trip hazard they cannot see.

29 CFR 1926.416(b)(2)

Scenario

Picture this: Carpenters are stripping forms on the second floor of a new building. Scrap boards with nails go into a pile next to the stairs, and a bundle of extension cords runs across the landing. Late in the day, a laborer carrying plywood heads down the stairs and cannot see his feet. Nobody has been hurt yet. What should the crew fix right now, and who should do it?

Crew discussion

1. How can we improve the housekeeping in our work areas?
2. Where does scrap pile up on this job, and are there enough containers there?
3. How are we getting debris down from the upper floors, and is the area below protected?
4. Is anything blocking a stairway, walkway or exit right now?

Bottom line **Clean as you go, pull the nails, stack materials so they stay put and keep every walkway, stairway and exit clear.**

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