Cleaning Up



“This isn’t an operating room,” an employee protested when he was criticized for his work area’s messy appearance.

“We can’t afford to spend time on making things look pretty. We’ve got production to get out,” he said.

That’s true as far as it goes, but plant housekeeping involves a lot more than making things look attractive. It can have a substantial effect on things like injuries, worker morale, operating costs, aisle traffic, floor space and fire hazards.

Good housekeeping is a mark of good workmanship, and your work team may be judged by how well you do it.

To succeed at housekeeping, your team needs to avoid two common approaches to plant housekeeping. The first is to relegate it to a position where it gets only half-hearted attention when things are slack. The other approach is to blast off suddenly with a big housekeeping drive and then let it dwindle to nothing.

What is needed is a carefully planned continuing program.

These points can help your team to achieve better housekeeping:

- Set high housekeeping standards and expect your team to live up to them. Each team member’s actions support this commitment. Each employee should understand that keeping his work area clean is a vital part of the job.
- Housekeeping should be made as easy as possible. A worker might throw a gum wrapper on the floor if a waste can isn’t handy. He’ll keep his bench clean if a brush is nearby. Your team needs a specific storage space for every tool and every piece of equipment.
- When planning housekeeping, don’t think in terms of Cleaning Up. Instead, think in terms of preventing the need for Cleaning Up.
- Much time and effort can be saved by maintaining equipment to prevent spillage and leakage.
- As much as possible, scrap, chips, cuttings and dust should be dumped directly from the machine into containers, not on the floor to be cleaned up later.
- Bad housekeeping feeds on itself. If one carton or skid is stored carelessly in an aisle, soon there will be another one and before long, the whole aisle is cluttered. Bad housekeeping habits must be nipped in the bud through constant

attention.

- Make a checklist tailored to your own work area. Use it in making periodic inspection tours to show which areas need improving. By being alert to signs of neglect and disorder, your team will be able to keep things looking good.