



Health & Safety Housekeeping Policy

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¹ or earlier if change in legislation or on risk assessment

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Policy Summary

Housekeeping is an essential part of a safe working environment. Keeping your work area clear and tidy can help eliminate the risk of workplace accidents such as slips, trips, and falls.

Risks from fire hazards can also be drastically reduced in a tidy workplace with paper, cardboard and other combustible materials stored safely or disposed of properly. Housekeeping can also help reduce risk by ensuring escape routes, such as corridors and stairwells, are kept clear of clutter and rubbish.

This policy demonstrates how a tidy workplace is a safe workplace and will cover all general areas within the university as well as specific work areas such as offices, laboratories, kitchens, and workshops.

This policy is additional to any cleaning regimes in place by the University's Property and Facilities team and is aimed at workers who, although not part of the university cleaning team, should be aware of the importance of a clean and tidy workplace.

This policy also applies to contractors working on campus. Whilst housekeeping will be written into their contracts, everyone must be vigilant regarding contractors transporting and storing materials and equipment around the campus.

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1. Introduction

Almost a third of workplace accidents in the UK are the result of slips, trips, and falls. A lot of slips, trips and falls can be the result of poor housekeeping e.g. working in an area which is untidy, cluttered or where items are in the wrong place.

In fact, a good housekeeping regime in the workplace is perhaps the most powerful strategy for eliminating slips, trips, and falls. Risks from fire hazards can also increase in an untidy workplace. Blocked fire exits or flammable material such as cardboard or rubbish being stored in a work area can all be classified as poor housekeeping and can increase the risk of injury not only from trips or falls but also by a person's inability to exit the building safely during an emergency.

Regular cleaning and tidying of your work area can help reduce many of these incidents:

- An untidy desk causing someone to stretch to reach out of the way objects.
- Trailing cables across a floor potentially causing someone to trip.
- Excess office furniture left in walkways and stairwells blocking an exit.
- Spillages not being cleared up promptly causing a slip hazard.
- Spillages of bodily fluids not being cleared up quickly causing infection and ill health through contact.
- Any sharps, such as broken glass, not cleared up immediately could cause cuts or other injuries.
- Boxes, cardboard and other packing material not disposed of properly blocking an exit or becoming fuel for a fire.
- Exposure to hazardous substances from poor storage or ineffective labelling could cause injury or ill health.
- Poor hygiene in kitchen/eating areas, as well as cups and plates being left in offices, can lead to bacteria and ill health for workers.
- Being struck by out of place objects that have been left in the wrong place.

One of the most common issues that most employees face in the workplace is clutter. Whether it is on the floor or on the desk, a messy workplace poses all manner of risks. Effective housekeeping can eliminate some workplace hazards and help get a job done safely and properly.

Benefits of good housekeeping:

- Fewer accidents and near misses (eliminate or reduce slips, trips and fall hazards).
- Decreased fire hazards by keeping paper and other combustible materials stored correctly.
- Improved emergency response by keeping fire escape routes clear.
- Better hygienic conditions in kitchen/break out areas and offices.
- More effective use of workspace with less clutter and items tidied away properly.
- Decreased risk of exposure to hazardous materials in laboratories, workshops and other areas where hazardous substances are stored.

Poor housekeeping can frequently contribute to accidents by hiding hazards that cause injuries.

If the sight of paper, debris, clutter and spills is accepted as normal, then other more serious health and safety hazards may be taken for granted.

Effective housekeeping is an ongoing operation. It is not a hit and miss clean-up done occasionally. Periodic “panic” clean-ups are costly and ineffective in reducing accidents.

Housekeeping is everyone’s responsibility.

2. Housekeeping in general areas across the university

Corridors, passageways and walkways should be kept free of clutter and debris. Stairwells and areas under stairwells should be kept clear and not used for storage, and fire escapes should not be blocked and corridors/passageways leading to them should be clear. All accesses and egresses should be unobstructed.

Any areas, passageways or stairwells within the university which have been blocked or filled with rubbish should be reported immediately to the Health & Safety Office or the Facilities Service Desk.

Any spillages should be cleared up immediately to avoid slippages. If cleaning staff are required to clean up any spillage, then they should put up slippery floor warning signs until the floor has been deemed safe.

Where an emergency response is required due to a spillage that has health and safety implications, everyone must follow the [Emergency Response Procedures \(napier.ac.uk\)](https://www.napier.ac.uk/emergency-response-procedures)

Report all slips, trips and falls, with or without injury, so the hazard can be corrected.

3. Housekeeping around the outside of buildings

Areas on campus that are outside of buildings also need to be kept clear and tidy. Car parking areas, walkways leading up to campus buildings and areas outside of exits and fire evacuation points (fire exits and assembly points) should all be kept clear and tidy where possible.

Any items in **car parking areas** blocking fire exits or access to the building should be reported, such as:

- A car parked illegally blocking a fire exit/access point.
- A large item being delivered or dropped off and left in front of a fire exit or access point.
- Any rubbish or disposed of items that have been left directly outside a fire exit/access point.

Walkways/Roads

- Wet leaves on paths and walkways can cause a slip hazard.
- Snow and ice on car parks and walkways around campus buildings can cause slip hazards.
- Burst water pipes/blocked drains can be a hazard through flooding or freezing in cold weather causing potential slipping hazards.
- Broken paving/uneven paths can be a trip hazard.
- Poorly lit areas around the campus building could cause a trip hazard if visibility is poor.
- Discarded rubbish could be a potential trip hazard, could block a fire exit route or, if left long enough, could cause harm through infection from bacteria.

- Rubbish bin areas can attract local children and then there is the potential for arson.
- Any contractors on site may store plant equipment or other materials in areas across the campus (inside and outside the buildings). If not stored properly these could become a trip hazard and/or could block someone's escape route during an emergency evacuation.

If spotted around campus areas any of the above potential hazards should be reported immediately to the Health & Safety Office or Facilities Service Desk.

4. Housekeeping in offices and classrooms

- Keep all access and egress routes clear.
- Walkways within offices, teaching spaces and lecture theatres, including aisles in classrooms, must be kept free of obstruction.
- Boxes, files, and various items piled in walkways can create a tripping hazard. Be certain that all materials are safely stored in their proper location to prevent build-up of clutter.
- Room furniture should be arranged to ensure safe access and egress.
- Tidy up your work area regularly.
- Office areas should be kept clear and clutter free.
- Don't leave dirty cups, plates or cutlery in offices or teaching rooms.
- Remove clutter regularly.
- Keep floor clear of cables and other trip hazards where possible.
- Organise cables under desks.
- Chairs should be pushed under desks when not in use.

5. Housekeeping in laboratories and workshops

Good housekeeping and following Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) can significantly reduce the risk of accidents and exposure to hazardous substances in laboratory and workshop areas. Spills and accidents are more likely to occur in cluttered workspaces.

Reduce the risk of slips, trips, and falls by:

- Cleaning up liquid or solid spills immediately.
- Keep cupboard doors and drawers closed when not in use.
- Keep passageways clear of obstruction.
- Floors should be free of hazards.
- Bags and coats should not be stored in laboratories or workshops and should be kept in lockers where available.
- Laboratory coats and other safety clothing should be hung in proper locations and not draped over equipment or benches.
- Other PPE such as safety glasses/goggles should be tidied away.
- Equipment, apparatus etc. which is not immediately required should always be returned to a safe storage place.

- Equipment, apparatus, and materials left lying around and out of their normal storage area may present a hazard to personnel and should be tidied away when not in use.
- Work surfaces, machinery, tools and general equipment should be left in a clean and safe condition.
- Unwanted materials, particularly combustible and flammable materials, should be disposed of safely and promptly using the appropriate disposal arrangements.
- Waste combustible material that is allowed to accumulate can also pose a serious fire risk and presents a risk to life if left in areas where they are blocking emergency escape routes.
- Keep fume cupboards, hoods and work bench areas clear of all material not being used.
- Good housekeeping is particularly important in chemical fume cupboards and hoods as a cluttered hood does not function properly and does not provide protection from hazardous vapours.
- Keep laboratory stools tucked in when not in use.
- Clean up any broken glassware, sharps and pipette tips from workbenches or floor areas.
- Do not store chemical containers on the floor.
- Stored items must not obstruct or obscure fire alarm call points, firefighting equipment, emergency procedure notices and building services controls, e.g. electrical switches, gas taps, water valves, etc.

Hazardous substances should be stored properly and separated dependant on their reactivity. Safe storage of hazardous substances should follow the segregation, separation, and ventilation of hazardous substances guidelines.

See [Hazardous Substances Policy \(Safe Purchase, Storage and Disposal\)](#)

Hazardous substances should be stored on shelving units but below shoulder height. Any excess or waste hazardous substances which cannot be disposed of safely in the laboratory area should be stored in outside storage areas to be collected by a chemical disposal company. Waste chemicals should not be stored indefinitely. Less commonly used equipment should be kept in storage.

Do not store excess cardboard boxes, equipment boxes etc. under lab benches, in knee holes, on shelves, or above shelves/cabinets throughout the lab. As well as a safety hazard this can also be a fire hazard. Tools and equipment should be stored safely and securely.

6. Housekeeping in kitchen areas

It is essential that good housekeeping is present in all kitchen, eating and break out areas across the university. Rubbish bins/waste receptacles are supplied and should be used to dispose of any waste materials such as discarded food, tissues/wipes, empty food containers, teabags etc.

- Regularly wipe down work surfaces, tables and other areas where food is prepared and consumed.
- Worksurfaces and flooring should be kept clean and free from clutter.
- Clean up spillages immediately.
- Cleaning chemicals should always be stored in labelled bottles.
- Chemicals/cleaning supplies should be stored separately from foodstuff.
- Rubbish should be stored appropriately and emptied regularly so as not to encourage pests.

- Microwaves should be cleaned by the user after every use.
- Safety equipment (such as fire blankets, fire extinguishers or first aid kits) should be easily and quickly accessible.
- Fire exits should be clearly labelled and never obstructed.
- Check for out of date food in fridge areas.

7. Housekeeping in storage rooms

- Storage rooms and areas should be clearly marked.
- Keep area clean and tidy.
- Dispose of cardboard and other packing materials regularly.
- Do not let rubbish build up.
- Separate incompatible hazardous substances.
- Ensure fire exits are kept clear.
- Do not store too many items on the floor.
- Use shelving units where possible but do not store too many items at height that require a ladder or a working platform to access them.

8. Training

Staff training is an essential part of any good housekeeping programme. Workers need to know how to work safely with the products they use. They also need to know how to protect other workers e.g. by putting up slippery floor warning signs or by reporting any unsafe conditions. Training can be practical on the job style training.

Staff working across the university should:

- Know how to dispose of items properly.
- Be able to safely clean up spillages etc. where appropriate.
- Understand how to report any hazards such as blocked access ways, dangerous spillages etc. as well as potential slip or trip hazards to the appropriate people.
- How to safely store their work equipment.
- Understand the importance of a clear and tidy working area.

Students should also be made aware of the importance of good housekeeping. This is particularly important where students are working in laboratories or workshops but can also be relevant in other areas across the university:

- Tidy away chairs under desks after lectures.
- Do not leave bags and coats on floors where they may be a trip hazard.
- Dispose of any empty drinks or food items in the appropriate bins provided.
- Clear their own plates/cutlery etc. from refectory areas using trays and trolleys provided.

For students working in laboratory and workshop areas, local safety inductions must be in place and should include instruction on good housekeeping and the importance of keeping a workplace tidy.

Appendix A : Housekeeping Checklist

	Yes	No	N/A
Floors and other areas			
Are floors clean and clear?			
Are floors in good condition?			
Are carpet or floor tiles sticking up?			
Are bags and clothes kept off the floor and stored safely?			
Walkways and Stairwells			
Are walkways in work areas unobstructed?			
Is the workplace lighting adequate?			
Are stairwells well lit?			
Are stairwells free of clutter?			
Are fire exits in your work area kept clear?			
Are all tread nosings fixed in position?			
Equipment			
Is equipment damaged or outdated?			
Is equipment serviced regularly?			
Is equipment checked regularly for wear and tear?			
Is equipment repaired promptly?			
Are machines and tools cleaned regularly?			
Spill Control			
Are all spills cleaned up quickly?			
Are safety procedures followed if hazardous substances are spilled?			
Are spillage absorption granules available for dealing with substances spilled?			
Is there a spill kit available?			
Are staff in area trained in dealing with spillages?			
Is there proper signage available to inform people that the floor is slippery?			
Is suitable PPE available?			
Waste Disposal			
Are staff in area trained to deal with waste materials?			
Are arrangements in place to deal with sharps in a safe manner?			
Are arrangements in place to deal with broken glass?			
Are arrangements in place to deal with a spillage of bodily fluids?			
Is there a specific area for storage of waste materials?			
Are waste containers emptied regularly?			
Are hazardous waste materials handled properly and safely?			
Storage			
Are storage areas safe and accessible?			

	Yes	No	N/A
Are materials stored in areas that do not obstruct stairs, fire exits, or firefighting equipment?			
Are materials stored in areas that do not interfere with workers?			
Are all storage areas clearly marked?			
Have areas been put aside for contractors to store their materials and equipment safely and securely?			
Fire Prevention			
Are combustible and flammable materials present only in quantities needed for the job at hand?			
Are hazardous materials stored in approved containers and away from ignition sources?			
Contractors			
Have contractors been allocated areas for the safe storage of materials and equipment?			
Are contractors' work areas clean and tidy?			
Are contractors' access and egress routes clear and tidy?			