

Housekeeping Is a Control

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Why this matters

A blocked path can force someone into traffic or delay an emergency response. Unstable storage and hidden sharp debris can create serious exposure. Housekeeping is part of the work method, not just the final cleanup.

Objective: Verify safe access and stable storage before work and after the task changes.

Key hazards or failure points

Blocked stairs, exits or walkways; scattered leads and debris; protruding nails; unstable stacks; waste accumulating near work; and a cleanup method that creates another hazard.

Practical controls

- Plan where materials, tools and waste will go before work starts. Keep required access and emergency routes usable. Coordinate deliveries and nearby work so a route does not become storage.
- Store materials using suitable supports and the applicable load, stability and separation requirements. Keep incompatible materials apart. Use designated waste arrangements and remove accumulation during the job.
- Choose a cleanup method for the material and hazard. Unknown dust, chemical spills, sharp waste or unstable piles need the appropriate procedure and trained people. Do not send someone into danger simply to tidy it.

Verify It in the Field

- Walk the actual access and evacuation routes from a safe position. Compare them with the site plan: check stairs, doors, crossings and access to emergency equipment. Confirm the specified clearances; do not invent a universal aisle width.
- Check storage against the approved arrangement and relevant capacity information. Look for leaning stacks, unsupported material, damaged supports or changed floor loading. Keep clear while a responsible person resolves instability.
- Check waste containers, removal timing and tool/cord locations with the crew. Ask who will maintain the route during the next work phase. Verify the needed cleanup equipment and procedure are available before starting.

Stop and reassess

Stop affected work for a blocked emergency route, unstable storage, a spill of unknown hazard or debris that forces people into another exposure. Protect the area, notify the responsible person and use the approved corrective method. Verify routes and storage again after cleanup or delivery, and rebrief before restarting.

Ask the crew

- Which route must stay usable during the next step and in an emergency?
- Where will new materials and waste go as the job progresses?
- What cleanup or storage problem requires specialist help rather than immediate handling?

A clear route must remain clear while the job is happening.

Next step: Record today's changes and checks on the free JSA Planning and Field-Verification Sheet. Supervisor check and attendance are separate.

[Free JSA planning sheet](#)

References: OSHA 1926.25 and 1926.250; applicable site storage and access plans. Expanded explanation and references accompany the web version.