

Often much of our focus is given to the hazards of a work task, but less focus is given to the hazards poor work area conditions create.

Work areas that are chaotic and have poor organization can lead to injuries and property damage incidents.

**Hazards Created by Chaotic Work Areas**

- **Struck-by incidents.** Work areas that do not have any designated paths for personnel walking through or areas blocked off for specific work tasks such as grinding, create struck-by hazards can be particularly dangerous. Flying debris, lifting loads, and moving objects can all create struck-by hazards for anyone in the area.
- **Slips, trips, and falls.** Objects on the ground due to poor organization or housekeeping create trip hazards for any walking through that area. Slippery surfaces due to moisture or other liquids such as oil can cause a slip or a fall. Uneven surfaces, steps, or unexpected drop-offs are also a common trip hazards in poorly designed work areas.
- **Caught in or between incidents.** Work areas that place people near moving parts or equipment is also a huge concern. Moving equipment such as belts or fans can grab a hold of a person’s clothing or hair pulling them into the moving parts.

**Best Practices for Work Area Setup**

- **Delineate walking paths from actual work areas.** Consider when physical barriers such as a fence or wall are needed to protect people from a hazardous work process. [Consider color coding for work areas](#) or the facility.
- **Organize all tools, equipment, materials, etc. in an area.** Everything should have its own place that does not pose a hazard to anyone in that area. Housekeeping is one of the most basic safe work practices there is.
- **Always guard moving parts and equipment** even when they are not in the immediate planned walking path. If people can fit into an area and the moving parts are not physically blocked off there is a chance of a caught in or between injury.
- **Keep walking and working surfaces clean and safe.** Mark any elevation changes with bright fluorescent paint. Patch any holes or major cracks to prevent trip hazards. Always strive to keep dry clean floors. Consider applying some type of grit or material that improves traction in areas where moisture can occur.

The above hazards and best practices are just a few of the many that are related to how a work area is set up and maintained. What hazards are we not addressing in our work areas?