

Down and Dirty: OSHA Sanitation Requirements

Sanitation goes hand in hand with a safe and healthy workplace – preventing workplace-related illnesses, promoting practical hygiene practices, and limiting the spread of disease (e.g., COVID-19, foodborne illness). Sanitation can apply to your entire workplace, such as providing sanitary washrooms, employing cleaning practices in kitchen areas, controlling the transmission of dust, and providing clean and comfortable walking-working surfaces. This one pager reviews the sanitation requirements in Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standard, [29 CFR 1910.141](#). These requirements apply to permanent places of employment, so consider these requirements when evaluating existing work areas and facilities, as well as when planning for new facilities or projects.



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HOUSEKEEPING PRACTICES

Proper housekeeping practices help keep your worksite neat and orderly, eliminating or reducing hazards that may lead to poor sanitary conditions. The OSHA standard says your workplace must:

- Keep each work area as clean as possible based on the type of work performed (i.e., an administrative space is inherently cleaner than a mechanic shop)
- Keep floors as dry as you can
- Install appropriate levels of drainage in areas with wet processes
- Utilize false floors, platforms, mats, and/or slip-resistant waterproof boots, as needed, in wet work areas
- Remove protruding nails, splinters, and loose boards, and cover unnecessary holes or openings for ease of cleaning floors.

For additional information on housekeeping for your walking-working surfaces, visit [29 CFR 1910.22](#).

WASTE DISPOSAL

Proper waste collection and disposal helps you protect the environment and promotes the health of your employees. The sanitation standard directs you to:

- Select waste containers that do not leak
- Equip waste containers with solid, tight fitting covers (unless it is sanitary without a cover)
- Regularly clean and maintain waste containers
- Remove debris/trash as often as necessary to sustain sanitary conditions.



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VERMIN CONTROL

Vermin control helps prevent the spread of disease. When identifying pests, it is good practice to eliminate their sources of food, water, and shelter in an effort to deter them from your workplace. OSHA says to:

- Prevent vermin, rodents, or insects from entering enclosed workspaces
- Implement an extermination program, if necessary.

WATER SUPPLIES

OSHA divides water supplies into two categories – potable (safe to drink) and non-potable (used in other purposes; do not drink). OSHA says you must:

- Provide potable water for drinking, cooking, preparing food, and washing of utensils and other food preparation materials
- Ensure portable drinking water containers are capable of being closed **and** equipped with a tap
- Clearly mark water sources for industrial or firefighting purposes as “non-potable” and ensure they prevent backflow into a potable water system
- Clean work areas with non-potable water only when it doesn’t create unsanitary conditions or cause harm to employees.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE CONSUMPTION

To prevent cross-contamination and foodborne illness, OSHA says to:

- Consider assigning designated eating and drinking areas
- Prohibit food and beverage consumption and storage in restrooms and areas in which employees may be exposed to toxic materials
- Provide waste containers with tight-fitting covers and empty these containers at least once each working day (unless unused)
- Protect food storage, preparation, and handling tasks from contamination and spoilage.

For additional information on the SMCX’s services, please visit the SMCX-hosted website at: <https://www.smscx.org/>.



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FACILITIES

OSHA provides sanitation requirements for: toilet rooms (e.g., restrooms, lavatories), washing facilities, and showers. OSHA states your workplace must:

- Maintain an adequate number of private toilet facilities for each sex, based on sex and number of employees ([see 1910.141\(c\)\(1\)\(i\) for requirements](#))
- Ensure sewage disposal methods do not endanger employee health
- Provide hot and cold running water, or tepid water, for washing facilities and showers
- Include soap, or cleansing agents, and a method of drying the hands for washing facilities
- Install an adequate number of showers when required by other OSHA regulations, and provide soap and individual clean towels for use
- Provide change rooms when required by other OSHA regulations
- Ensure washed or wet work clothing is dry before reuse