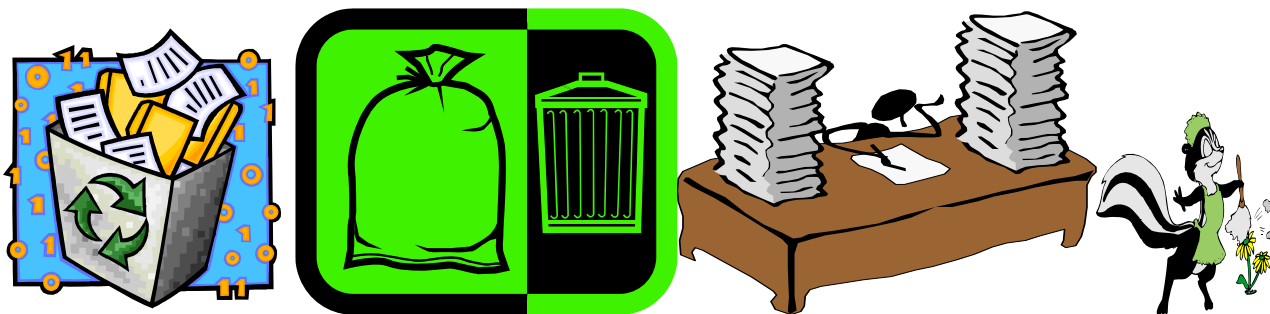## Loss Control Services – 5 Minute Safety Topic

Conquer Clutter - What is a work space for?

Not surprisingly, the answer is a place to get work done. If a work space is well-designed and properly maintained, it should serve its purpose well. Clutter does not help to get work done.

How Clutter Affects Safety: It isn't simply a matter of being untidy when it comes to clutter all over the place. It can also have more far-reaching safety consequences. Falling or tripping is probably the main concern. Workers in every occupation are admitted to the hospital in large numbers every year simply as a result of suffering a fall as a direct result of clutter left lying around. And, by 'clutter', this can mean not just "junk" but useful supplies, products, tools, books and newspapers, in fact clutter is anything left lying around instead of being put away in its rightful place. Clutter may also become a danger if a fire breaks out by blocking escape routes to get out and for emergency services to get in.

✓ Is it possible that there are good excuses for clutter? Lack of storage shelves, cabinets and floor space may contribute to reasons for clutter but these issues can be managed; it just takes some thought and cooperative effort to get started. Clutter, trash, dirt and disorganization are symptoms that have a cure.

✓ Is everything in the work space contributing to getting work done? Look around, take inventory of the items in the work area. Damaged items, broken chairs, obsolete equipment and excess materials are not helping the cause. In fact, they are likely causing frustration and inefficiency and may create unsafe situations. Get rid of useless items by sending them out with the trash or recycling. Tools, excess supplies and unnecessary equipment can be turned in for repair and/or reuse elsewhere.

✓ What does an organized work space look like? Arrange the most needed work items and materials for the work to flow efficiently through your work area. One type of arrangement might not be quite the same as another person would choose because the methods of working are slightly different. Place frequently used items near at hand. Use lower priority space for other items. The old saying, "A place for everything and everything in its place", still has value today.

✓ Who should take control of preventing clutter? After conquering a cluttered work space, keep on top of it and do not let the clutter creep back in. Work with management and other staff to keep clutter controlled. Everyone benefits from having clean, organized and efficient work spaces.

* Think About Safety *