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Clean

By Paperitalo Staff

I have had a chance to be engaged in several conversations recently about mill cleanliness. Separately, we have been running a poll since October asking respondents to tell us whether their mill is clean or not. 77% have said they work in a clean mill.

We might start with the purpose for having a clean mill. Amazingly, some do not see the importance of this and may even see it as a cost. This is not correct. A clean mill has a better safety record, production record, uptime and reduced maintenance. The value is immeasurable.

What should be cleaned? Property line to property line. No area of the mill property is exempt from being maintained at a high state of cleanliness. And don't forget, your mill exists on many levels: basements, operating floors, mezzanines, inside dryer hoods and roofs. Every surface must be kept in mind.

What are the standards? The only things that exist anywhere are the items necessary now to "spin the invoice printer." Now is an important word. That old bone yard or pile of things you are going to get to someday must go--they are more of a liability than an asset. A "clean" machine operating floor, when thoroughly examined with a flashlight, will yield no more than one five gallon bucket of debris. An office--one coffee cup.

If you arrive as a manager in a mill or department whose management has been in chaos, the place to start is a thorough cleaning. Start in your own workplace and move outward. In fact, start earlier than that--start with the vehicle you drive to work. Become obsessed about cleanliness. Become obsessed about trashing items that do not spin the invoice printer.

If hoarding is your normal modus operandi, this is going to be tough. However, it is very, very important. Given two similar mills making similar products, the clean mill will outperform the dirty one on every parameter. You must break the hoarding habit.

A clean mill means high standards. It will permeate everything done there automatically. Emails will become crisper, morning meetings will get to the point, people will work with a purpose. And all of this will happen only from focusing on being clean.

How do you get your team on board? As mentioned previously, start with yourself. Start with your automobile and move to your office or workspace. Don't give yourself a lot of time--24 hours is plenty if you are serious about this. Then gather layouts or maps of all areas for which you are responsible. Gather your direct reports. Assign them areas to manage and tell them the standards. Don't let them leave the room until every level of every area under your control has a manager. One manager related to me he sent the HR manager out in the mill to manage a storage area. The HR manager had never been in the mill before, or if they had been, it was years ago.

Then hold inspections regularly. Cross inspect (one manager inspects another manager's area). Give prizes, embarrass the slackers. You can clean up any property in six months or less. After that, just keep it up and reap the rewards. Have meetings with your direct reports regularly that are about nothing but cleanliness.

Now do you think your mill is clean?

Of course, safety, as already mentioned soars when you operate a clean mill. It just goes hand in hand. ##