1. **Identification of Workplace Hazard**

All employee-occupied areas, called work spaces, must meet minimum safety standards, such as good lighting, sound flooring, good housekeeping, protection from changes in elevation and adequate means of egress. Specific Cal/OSHA standards govern these workplace conditions and structures. Although the Cal/OSHA standards in this area are voluminous and detailed, for most workplaces meeting the objective of safe work spaces is a matter of good observation and judgment.

2. **Information for Managers and Trainers**

The following points provide a perspective on the types of hazards that should be identified and abated to meet the safe work space and work surface requirements of the Cal/OSHA standards.

1. Guard railings, that must be at least 42 inches high, have a mid-rail and be able to support a 20-pound load for each foot of length, must be installed on any change in elevation of more than 30 inches. Exceptions are made for loading docks and other special situations. Stairways must be similarly guarded.

2. Overhead work areas 6 feet or more in height must be equipped with toe boards at least 3.5 inches in height to prevent falling objects.

3. Wall openings must be protected by guard railings or barriers that can withstand 200 pounds of pressure.

4. Floor openings must be guarded by a cover or guard railings at all times or be constantly attended.

5. A safe means of egress must be provided from any occupied building. It must be maintained free of obstructions at all times and be illuminated, artificially if required.

6. Exit signs stating “EXIT” must meet a 50 lux lumination standard and have at least 6 inch lettering and be located at doors and intersections. There is an exception for spaces with an occupant load of fewer than 50 persons, if consistent with local building and fire codes.

7. Decorative materials near exits and avenues of egress must be flame retardant.

8. Generally, at least two exits are required unless there are fewer than 30 occupants. They must open in the exiting direction. In no case may an exit be locked or obstructed, although it may be equipped with an alarm.

9. Every elevated space used for storage must be load rated and the rating posted conspicuously. The weight of material stored may not exceed capacity. Materials must be stored, piled and racked in a manner that prevents slipping or falling.

10. Several feet of head space must be provided for any exit route, except doorways. If necessary, padding may be used as an alternative but only to 6 feet.

11. When mechanical equipment must be accessible, including roofs and subsurfaces, fixed permanent ladders must be installed. Openings must not be less than 22 by 30 inches.
Work area surfaces must be in good repair and free of projections, obstructions, grease, oil and water to the extent reasonable.

Emergency equipment, such as fire extinguishers and electrical control panels, must be kept unobstructed for immediate access.

Most of these requirements are addressed through building design and construction consistent with applicable codes. Employers need to assure ongoing compliance with activities subject to employer control such as housekeeping and storage practices which are covered in the following safe work practices.

3. Employee Safe Work Practices and Personal Protective Equipment

Work Surface and Work Space Safety

All employees must comply with the following safe work practices:

(1) Practice good housekeeping in work areas under your control. Do not allow debris, tools or other materials which may be a tripping or slipping hazard accumulate on work floors and surfaces.

(2) Clean up spills of water, oil or any other material immediately or take other approved actions to prevent slipping and other accidents.

(3) Floor openings which are protected by covers, railings or other guards must not be left open while unattended.

(4) Anytime a movable guard of any type is removed, replace it upon completion of the work task.

(5) Know the means of egress from your work area in an emergency and an alternative route.

(6) Do not block aisles or means of egress (including doors) with any object or material being stored, even temporarily.

(7) Do not obstruct any piece of emergency equipment including fire extinguisher, eye wash, safety shower, etc. or an electrical or power control panel with any material or other object.

(8) Report any unsafe work surface or work area hazard to your supervisor or the person responsible for injury and illness prevention. Examples include: spills which have not been cleaned up, projections into aisles, tripping hazards, unguarded falling hazards, etc.