Housekeeping Matters: Clean Floors, Clear Aisles, Safer Workplace Fatality File



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What Happened

For years, OSHA investigators repeatedly found the same conditions inside Dollar General stores across the United States: aisles blocked by rolling carts, emergency exits buried behind merchandise, and fire extinguishers inaccessible behind stacked inventory. Workers navigated these hazards every shift. In August 2023, a gunman entered a Dollar General store in Jacksonville, Florida and opened fire, killing three people. Security footage showed a maze of metal carts, towering containers, and cluttered product piles obstructing the store's exit routes, and OSHA opened a fatality and catastrophe investigation on August 26, 2023, citing federal laws against blocked exits and congested walkways as a factor.

What Went Wrong

The hazards were known, documented, and ignored. OSHA's own regional administrator had warned in writing that "seconds lost trying to move boxes to reach a fire extinguisher or get out a safety exit can be the difference between life and death in an emergency." Despite over $21 million in proposed penalties across more than 240 inspections since 2017, the same housekeeping failures kept appearing – blocked exits, cluttered walkways, and unsafely stacked merchandise. Poor housekeeping was not an accident. It was an uncorrected pattern that workers lived with every day.

The Bottom Line

As part of a $12 million OSHA settlement in 2024, Dollar General was required to ensure emergency exits had clear paths, aisles were unobstructed, and inventory was stacked safely – measures that should have been standard practice from day one. Cluttered aisles and blocked exits are not a minor inconvenience. They are

a documented, life-threatening hazard. Good housekeeping keeps every exit open and every worker safe.

Source: https://www.dol.gov/