

How do we tell an employee to clean up her desk?

Question: We have an employee whose desk looks like she has a picnic on it every day—and she leaves it that way when she goes home at night. Apple cores, juice bottles, yogurt containers all pile up. The cleaning staff sweeps it all away overnight, but during the day, it's just an unsightly mess. Plus, she sometimes loses work documents in all the debris. Is it OK to tell her to clean up her act and get organized? What should I say? I'm not her mother — **Malek, Illinois**

Comments

Two questions come to mind. Is there a company policy about eating at your desk? If not it may be a good time to suggest something in writing that addresses office standards in general that includes this topic. It could also include decorations, plants and photos too. The other question, are clients subjected to seeing this when they visit your office? If so, again a great time to address the standards that you want your clients to see.

Posted by: Disgusted | May 13, 2008 at 02:32 PM

Does she not have a trash can?!?!?! I would ask her to please throw out food items (and other trash) when she is done. Stress the need for professional appearance and clean work documents. Tell her ants (or some other critter) was found near the filing cabinets if need be. I would also let the cleaning staff know that it is not their job to clean off the desks. Most companies have a policy about employees keeping their own work areas clean to avoid the cleaning crew throwing out something that is not trash.

Posted by: Not her mom either | May 14, 2008 at 10:28 AM

Company policy or not, it's just common sense to clean up after you have eaten at your desk. Just tell this person that the appearance of her desk is not acceptable and not very professional to say the least. If she continues to pile up stuff, take away her eating/drinking priviledges.

Posted by: Margaret | May 20, 2008 at 12:37 PM

I have the same general question, but does not pertain to food, but piles and piles of paper piled high and scattered all over the desks where it appears very messy and unprofessional, not to mention the table top may come crashing down with all the weight on the employee causing a hazard? This employee does not file (or toss) anything away where it should be. All suggestions welcome! Thank you.

Posted by: Becky | May 20, 2008 at 01:17 PM

People who eat at their desks and leave a mess are not yet a "protected class." Inform, coach, discipline, and document of course.

Posted by: Steve | June 06, 2008 at 11:16 AM