

# The Benefits to Keeping a Clean Job Site



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How many times do you come across a job site that looks as if a bomb exploded on it? Piles of waste and materials are haphazardly strewn about, and litter from the workers tumbles around in the wind. Unfortunately, not all landscape design/build companies make job site cleanup an active part of a job and don't understand the multiple benefits it offers.

It all starts with a plan. Jeff Rak, president of Land Creations Landscaping Inc. in Columbia Station, Ohio, starts planning how to keep a site orderly from the moment he sells a job.

"When we sell a job, we do a 'setup' on that and determine where things are going to go – where materials are going to be laid out on the property, where the tool trailer is going to be located, and what areas we're going to allow to be damaged or traveled through, and what areas we aren't," says Rak.

## **Benefits of Clean Job Sites**

- Happy customers
- Safety of crews and the public
- Productivity
- Avoidance of lawsuits
- Employee morale

Rak will sometimes set up a perimeter that his crews cannot go outside of, or make a driveway out of plywood or sometimes gravel and make it an access point, all with the goal of keeping the mess on a job site to a minimum.

"It takes a little extra time to do that, but it's what you have to do sometimes," he says.

Rak even builds setup and cleanup time right into his estimates, allotting 30 minutes each morning and also 30 minutes at the end of each day.

"Setup is getting your tools out and getting everything ready to go, but at the end of the day, we want to give guys time to clean the driveway off and clean up any scrap or trash," says Rak. "We don't allow any trash to be left on-site. Every day, we have them haul their trash or material that will not be used back to the shop because we don't need to have all that extra stuff laying around, otherwise you have a bomb at the end of the job."



Rak also communicates to his crews that they're going out to someone's home, so they have to respect their property and family.

"We don't want the customer coming home and having to walk through mud to get into the house if we can help it. We pride ourselves on making sure the property is clean and neat," he says.

It's especially important for Rak and his company to keep orderly job sites because most of his clients are high-end residential. But it's even important for one nursing home commercial client he has, because leaving tools around could result in people getting hurt.

"We actually have to go through the building to access a courtyard and keep that floor swept the entire time we're working there," Rak says. "So every time we take anything in and out, we have to have a guy with a broom just to sweep it off so there are no trip-and-fall hazards in the hallway."

One of the main benefits of a clean and orderly job site, Rak says, is increased productivity. If there are no piles to walk over, crews won't have to fight to get where they need to go.

"It's a lot easier when the guys are working in a clean and open space," says Rak. "A lot of times, I've gone on jobs where we worked with a subcontractor, and you can't even get a wheelbarrow on the site because there are piles of stuff everywhere. Not every job is perfect like that, but we do our best to try to keep things organized."

Safety is also huge. For example, the client's kids are probably going to come home at night and walk around to see the site.

"We tape off the site so people can't walk back there, but you know kids will, so if you have tools and debris and things that can injure people lying all over the place, that's something you need to be concerned with," Rak says. "That's what drives us also to keep the site clean through the working process, is the safety thing, because workers' comp is very expensive."

Ricardo Magana, department manager/estimator at DC Landscaping in Fremont, California, has some of his own best practices when it comes to keeping job sites tidy.

"Always keep garbage containers on-site, pick up all garbage before lunch and

before leaving the work site at the end of each day, keep sidewalks and driveways clean, and take all food waste at the end of each day to prevent animals from making a mess," says Magana.

✖ In Magana's mind, keeping residential and commercial sites clean is equally important, especially if customers live on the properties or there are pedestrians around the work areas.

Magana says keeping sites clean helps you avoid complaints from owners and neighbors and elevates employees' morale. After all, who doesn't want to work in a clean place? Plus, clients always notice a clean work site.

"In our client surveys, we always have good reviews, and when they refer us to other clients, they always mention how well we're keeping the site," he says.

Magana agrees that safety is also a critical reason for keeping sites uncluttered and free of a mess. He says his company only has one minor injury recorded over the last five or six years due to their fastidiousness when it comes to job sites.

"It also prevents customer injuries and lawsuits," he says. "I can't remember the last time we had a complaint from customers or anybody else."

Training is a critical component to making sure employees are following best practices in all areas, including maintaining work sites.

"We have safety/training every other Wednesday on a different topic," Magana says. "We remind them to keep the workplace clean and safe for us and other people around them."