



Lean Yellow Belt Project – 5S Transformation of the PPE Room

Project Team

Project Lead: Jeff Irvine – Supervisor, Materials Management

Team Members: Wayne Anderson, James Degen, Nic Pozzobon

Organization: City of Kitchener



A low traffic room in the overall stores area had started out during COVID as an ideal place to store high value and/or difficult to source items, however since COVID, it had turned into a long term storage or dumping ground for items that were expired, obsolete or were simply left in that room out of sight to most. This lean project allowed me to share yellow belt lean concepts with the stores team to take this room from an unorganized assortment of items to an organized storage system of inventory and non-inventory pieces while creating a great deal of surplus storage space that is available for future needs. This exercise was completed in less than a day and proved to the entire team that with a little organization and effort long term improvement results are possible that continue to impact stores to this day.

– **Jeff Irvine**
Supervisor, Materials Management



Challenges



PPE room turned into storage for obsolete and excess items



With no plan established for long-term use, the space evolved into an unsupervised “junk room” over time



Being out of the main workflow and line of sight, it was easy to ignore, resulting in clutter and disuse



The room housed items with no current value, inconsistent storage methods, and poor labelling, affecting operational efficiency



Objectives



Ensure the space is well defined, well labelled, and well maintained



Create a designated area for obsolete/TBD items, with a regular schedule to review, disposition, and action them



Complete Phase 2 modifications to racking to ensure it provides the best benefit for the team, and encourage future adjustments as required



Enable any team member, including new employees, to quickly and easily locate required items and understand why they are in the space



Solution

The 5S methodology was executed through a structured, hands-on event on December 6, 2024, transforming the PPE Room into an organized and clearly defined storage space. Activities and outcomes were aligned with the five pillars of 5S.



Sort

- All items in the room were sorted into “keep,” “remove,” or “TBD” piles.
- “TBD” items were revisited and removed from the room; most were redistributed to teams across INS.
- Temporary areas were created for each category during the process.



Set in Order

- All shelves in the room were standardized: 2 rows for inventory, 1 row for non-inventory, and 4 rows marked “not to be used”.
- “Keep” items were placed back on shelves in a well-organized, well-labeled, and standardized manner.



Shine

- All shelving units and the room itself were cleaned thoroughly to remove years’ worth of dirt and dust.



Standardize

- Before-and-after photos were taken to document the transformation.
- Standardized labeling and layout plans were agreed upon to maintain consistency.



Sustain

- The sustain plan was undertaken in January 2025, where all stores staff participated in re-imagining the room’s usage and layout.
- The original 5S team will meet monthly to review the room layout, ensure the original goals are maintained, and review/implement improvement ideas.
- Accountability check-ins are scheduled for 1, 3, 6, and 12-month intervals, all led by Jeff Irvine.

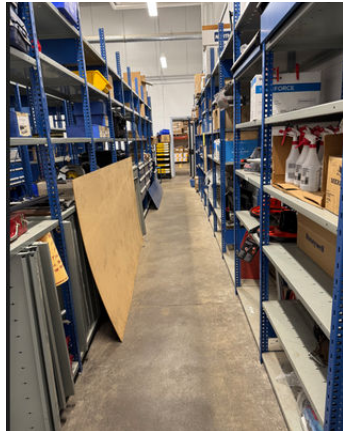
About 5S:

5S is a Lean tool that provides a number of techniques and activities aimed at removing waste from the workplace by means of improved workplace organization, visual communication and overall cleanliness.

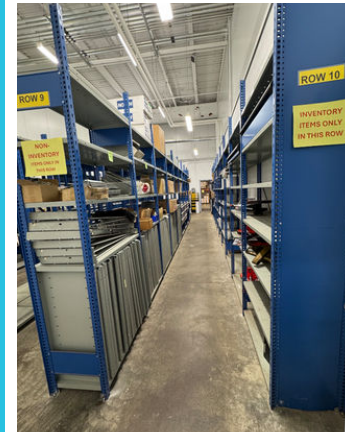
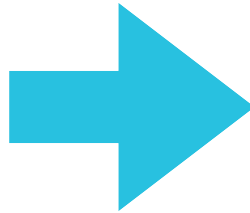


Results

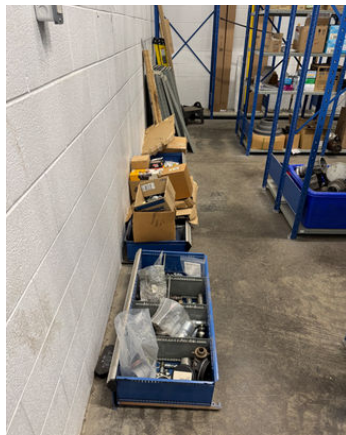
Before-and-after images demonstrate significant improvement in space utilization, tidiness, and visibility of stored items.



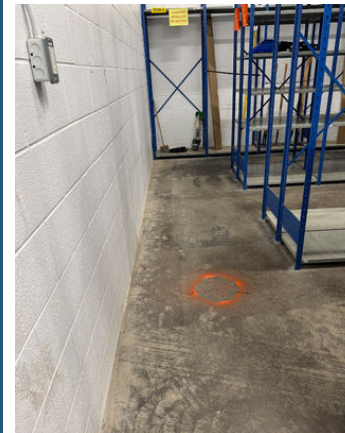
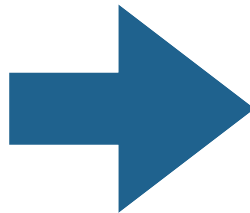
Before



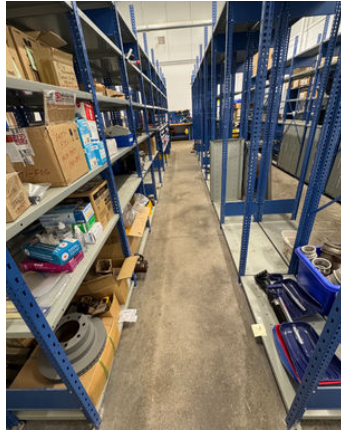
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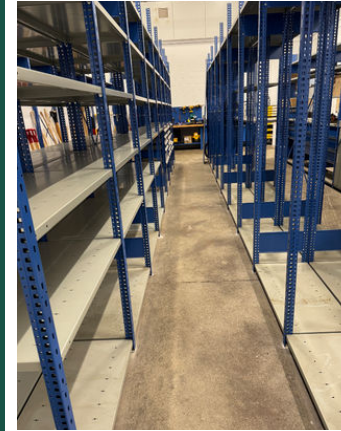
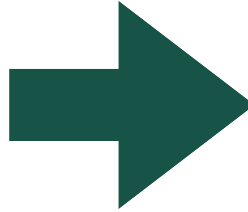
Before



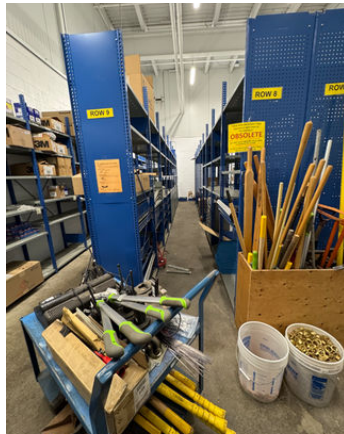
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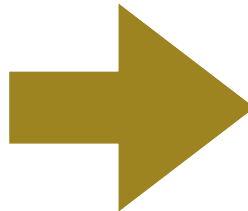
Before



After



Before



After



Impact

This Lean Yellow Belt project successfully turned a neglected space into an organized, functional, and review-ready environment. The new layout improves efficiency, inventory control, and usability for all staff, while preparing the room for continued improvements and future flexibility.