

## Storage in Corridors, Stair Towers and Hallways

Storage in exit pathways, including corridors, stair enclosures and hallways, is a persistent problem on the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Campus. While corridors, stair enclosures and hallways are a seemingly convenient space to store items during office moves or renovations, storing materials in egress paths can create a serious hazard.

Corridors, stair enclosures and hallways are not assigned to departments and administrative units; any use must not adversely affect safety or put the university at risk of regulatory action. Corridors, stair enclosures and hallways used for egress must remain free of hazardous materials, equipment, storage, and other materials and debris to assure safety. Allowed use must not obstruct access or visibility of safety equipment, lighting, exit and other signs.

The primary hazard involved is access to exits. Because building occupants must have clear exit pathways or routes and enough space to exit a building in an emergency, the Life Safety Code (NFPA 101) requires a minimum width for exit pathways. In addition, any portion of a building that is open to the public or has employees who are protected by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) is required to have exit access of at least 36 inches; the minimum clear width for doors is 32 inches.

The Life Safety Code also requires that exit routes not decrease in width going toward the exit. Exit routes may not be used for any purpose other than an exit, may not be obstructed by any means, and any objects that project into an exit route may not reduce the width of the exit route to less than its minimum required width. When items are stored in corridors, they often will be placed along the wall; however, important safety devices such as fire extinguishers, automated external defibrillator (AED) wall mounted units, some escape masks, and fire alarm pull stations, are often mounted on walls. Access to safety devices must not be obstructed by improperly stored or placed items. Important signs that show exits and evacuation routes, as well as braille exit and staging area signage, must also be clear of improperly stored items. Blocking such signage may prevent individuals with disabilities from safely evacuating the building. Similarly, persons who use a wheelchair may be hindered by storage in the halls. The UNL Fire Marshal encourages all offices to make sure all exit routes are kept clear so potential evacuations can be as safe and swift as possible.

In general, the following restrictions apply to all Corridors and Stair Enclosures:

- NO storage is allowed in corridors of buildings not equipped with automatic sprinklers.
- NO storage is allowed located within a stairway or stair enclosure.
- Nothing may obstruct the required minimum width of a corridor. That would include items that could be easily moved or tipped over.

Keep in mind:

- Corridors may never be used as routine work spaces or for general storage.
- Maintain a clear area around corridor eye washes, emergency showers, and fire extinguishers. Anything that interferes with the use of corridor safety equipment is prohibited.
- Never store or use hazardous materials in a corridor.

Examples of items that are permitted, **subject to approval** by the Fire Marshal, include:

- ATMs
- Empty containers of liquefied cryogenic gases (e.g., nitrogen) secured to the wall with a top-ring tether.
- Empty compressed **inert** gas cylinders, for service storage only (e.g., argon, helium, neon, nitrogen, krypton, carbon dioxide), secured to a substantial, fixed surface, in an acceptable manner.
- Seismically secured non-combustible or low combustible filing cabinets and storage cabinets with latching doors (no hazardous materials storage)
- Low combustible chairs and table for breaks if a break room not available on the floor, provided they are arranged so they do not interfere with the egress path.
- Low combustible chairs and tables for waiting areas, within reason, given space available
- White boards, bulletin board, art, signs, display cases, and similar wall hung items that are low or noncombustible and occupy a reasonably small percentage of the wall
- Food, drink, and similar vending machines that are secure from tipping.

Examples of items that are not permitted include, but are not limited to:

- Mechanical equipment with exposed/unguarded belts pulleys and gears
- Any item that produces steam, odors, aerosols
- Refrigerators, lab equipment, etc.
  - Exceptions (**In Approved Limited Access Corridors Only**):
    - Centrifuges with sealed rotors for BSL-1 and non-infectious materials
    - Refrigerators and freezers, when the location and use does not jeopardize emergency egress.
    - Other lab equipment in limited access corridors when the location and use does not jeopardize emergency egress.
    - Case by case approval for biological safety and fire prevention is required
- Workstations (typical desk and chair/computer/loose and combustible materials)
- Overstuffed sofa, futons and similar highly combustible furniture Combustible materials outside enclosed cabinets. This includes shelving, journals, papers, books, recycle, and boxes
- Recycle and waste containers except those approved for public areas
- Equipment and property to be picked up by Surplus (temporary storage)
- Temporary storage associated with construction (unless specifically planned, designated and authorized)
- Copy machines
- Cardboard or wooden boxes
- Pallets of chemicals
- Trash or recycling receptacles
- Compressed gas cylinders containing toxic or flammable gases
- Water bottles larger than 5 gallons.
- Flammable liquid storage cabinets
- Decorative materials

## Conditions for Allowed Items

- All items must be located along one side of the corridor and located so that it does not block access to panels, emergency equipment or obstruct signage.
- Large equipment may not be placed on tables or stacked on top of other equipment.
- Extension cords are not allowed; all equipment shall be plugged directly into an outlet.
- Large heavy objects must be adequately secured.
- Table, chairs and other furnishings must be of low combustibility.
- Equipment may not reduce required corridor width, typically 44 inches but greater in some cases (confer with B&FS).
- Maintain clearances as follows:
  - Emergency Showers: 24 inches from non-electrical and 60 inches from electrical equipment
  - Doors: 18 inches from pull side and 12 inches on the push side from the door latch for accessibility (see ANSI A117.1)
  - Fire extinguishers: 18 inches left and right and nothing below
  - No closer to the ceiling than 18 inches in buildings equipped with a sprinkler system; 24" in buildings that are not.
  - Doors from occupied rooms must meet building code swing clearance requirements (At least 37 inches clear in corridor when door fully open). (confer with B&FS)
  - Electrical/Access panels/drinking fountains: Six (6) inches from edge and 3 feet minimum total width of the access panel or fixture; nothing allowed above or below

Upon notice from the Fire Marshal, unauthorized items shall be removed promptly, within the following timeframe:

- Immediately, if material is hazardous (compressed gases, hazardous chemicals, etc.)
- Within 30 days if the item is non-hazardous

Contact UNL Building & Safety, by email to: [buildsafe@unl.edu](mailto:buildsafe@unl.edu) to request authorization to place equipment or material in a corridor or request an inspection of an area.