

Clutter as a Laboratory Safety Concern

Campus laboratories that are cluttered and poorly organized present a variety of safety hazards to researchers, students, and visitors. In some cases, campus laboratories have been cited by government regulators for excessive clutter and related hazards.

This document describes UCSC's requirements for controlling clutter in campus laboratories. These requirements are based on regulations, campus policies, consensus "best practices," and input from researchers and laboratory safety professionals.

To maintain a safe and well-organized laboratory, it is important to properly dispose of chemicals and equipment that are no longer needed, and not to buy in bulk unless there is space available to safely store the material. Also, it can be useful to schedule "lab clean-up days" periodically throughout each academic year.

These requirements apply across the UCSC campus. In cases where these requirements cannot be met, or for clarification, please contact the Environmental Health & Safety at 831-459-2553 or visit the EH&S website at: <http://ehs.ucsc.edu>.

Clutter Control

Controlling clutter in campus laboratories requires all of the following:

- ✓ Clear aisles, exits, and hallways of obstructions and slipping or tripping hazards (e.g., boxes, electrical cords, pipette tips on the floor).
- ✓ Ensure unblocked access to all of the following:
 - Eyewash/safety showers
 - Electrical panels (maintain 36" clearance in front)
 - Fire extinguishers
 - Chemical storage cabinets
 - Fume hoods
 - Waste containers
- ✓ Remove clutter from fume hoods, and ensure that they are not used for long-term storage of equipment, chemicals, or supplies that are not regularly used in the fume hood.
- ✓ Personnel must be able to see clearly through the protective glass sashes on fume hoods. Minimize postings and writing on sashes.
- ✓ Empty containers of unwanted materials (including trash) on a regular basis, and never allow them to overflow.
- ✓ Maintain 18 inches of clearance from the top of stored materials to the ceiling in laboratories with fire sprinklers, and 24 inches if no sprinklers are present.



- ✓ Store excess materials in a neat, secure manner that provides easy access and reduces the potential for falling, collapsing, rolling, or spreading of the material. Limit overhead storage to lightweight, non-hazardous items.
- ✓ Store chemical containers, supplies, and equipment are to be stored away from the edges of benches and shelves unless shelf lips or other restraints are in place. Relocate precariously stored items.
- ✓ Containers holding chemicals should not be stored on the floor. When this is unavoidable, store containers in plastic tubs or other secondary containment.
- ✓ Never stack chemical containers directly on top of one another (unless in original boxes that can be safely stacked), and/or with incompatible chemicals (such as acids with bases, or flammables with oxidizers).
- ✓ Clearly mark bench areas containing radioactive materials with radiation tape and sorbent pads.
- ✓ Clean up all spills promptly. Never leave puddles, powders, or unknown materials on floors or work surfaces.
- ✓ Store sharp objects so as to prevent any cut or puncture hazard.
- ✓ Daisy-chaining of extension cords and/or power strips is not permitted.
- ✓ Store equipment, chemicals, glassware, and supplies not in regular use away from workstations.
- ✓ Do not use leg space beneath benches and desks in a way that prevents proper ergonomic posture.
- ✓ Keep personal desk spaces and other “clean areas” near or in the laboratory free of all hazardous research materials.
- ✓ Neatly store lab coats and safety glasses away from potential sources of contamination.
- ✓ Never store hazardous materials in refrigerators that contain food.
- ✓ Only eat or store food designated areas.
- ✓ Maintain sufficient open space within the laboratory to manage the acquisition and disposition of materials.



It is Possible:

