



LABORATORY HOUSEKEEPING

Poor housekeeping is a contributing factor to accidents and fires in labs. Follow these best practices for safety.

CHEMICALS

Keep bulk chemicals stored in cabinets or designated storage rooms. Obtain an amount sufficient to continue your work, such as a one-day supply. This will free up lab bench space and minimize the amount of chemical released if a spill occurs.

Keep the lids on chemical containers. This reduces the possibility of a spill and potential fumes released into your lab.

Maintain your chemical inventory. [Label](#) your chemical bottles with easily identifiable labels. Keep your inventory up to date in [MyChem](#). An up-to-date chemical inventory will help you keep track of your chemicals, and it may be used by the fire department and University personnel when responding to an emergency in your lab.

REMOVE CLUTTER

Keep lab benches and hoods as uncluttered as possible. This may seem impossible when you're conducting complicated tests or have numerous test samples, but continually remind yourself to keep things organized.

Keep containers and equipment away from the edge of benches. Do you have to reach over bottles and cultures to get to something? Chances are you're about to knock something on to the floor. This happened at a major university on the east coast, resulting in a fire and evacuation of buildings surrounding the lab.

What about the shelves above your desk or lab bench? A general rule is put heavy items on the lower shelves and lighter items on the upper shelves. Overloading shelves with infrequently used equipment and extra lab supplies can cause problems with falling items. You could injure yourself or fellow lab personnel and likely ruin your test or research.

CLEANING UP

As you tidy up your lab, please remember:

- Don't move unwanted items into the hallway. Hallways must be kept clear in case of emergency evacuation.
- Store items on shelves or in non-porous containers that can be wiped down.
- Identify stockpiles of legacy documents and scan or store what needs to be kept per your [records retention](#) policy.
- Recycle porous materials such as paper and cardboard where it will be promptly removed.
- Store unused or spare equipment in a designated storage room.
- [Recycle chemicals](#) you no longer use.
- Dispose of old, unwanted equipment or supplies:
 - a. Review the [UW Surplus website](#) for a list of items that UW Surplus cannot accept, such as chemicals, lab plasticware, and sharps.
 - b. Follow the instructions on the [Decontamination Form](#) for items that UW Surplus can accept.
 - c. Visit the [Hazardous Material Disposal and Recycling page](#) for information on disposing of items that UW Surplus cannot accept.

KEEP PATHWAYS CLEAR

Always keep at least a 3-foot access path out of your lab area. It is common for equipment and materials to be continually moved in, out, and around a laboratory. Have designated storage spaces for portable equipment and carts that you routinely use.

EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

Keep emergency equipment in view and accessible. If your route is blocked, it may delay your access to this equipment during an emergency: Telephone, first aid kit, fire extinguisher, fire alarm pull station, eye wash station or safety shower. If this equipment is not in your lab, know where it is located.