

MSAD 75
Safety Guidelines

Overhead Storage

September 7, 2011
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Background:

On numerous occasions during Fire Chief Occupancy Inspections and Insurance Company Safety Inspections the District gets cited for Overhead Storage violations. The violations pertain to Personnel Safety (OSHA) and Life Safety (NFPA) issues that could result in a hazardous situation.

Requirements:

Personnel Safety – [29CFR1910.176] Storage overhead should be avoided due to the hazards created while placing or removing items overhead. When no other option exists to overhead storage keep the following in mind:

- 1) Only store light items overhead, place heavier/bulky items on lower shelves.
- 2) Use proper means (i.e. ladders, NOT chairs, boxes, lower shelf, etc.) to reach the top shelf.
- 3) Use proper techniques placing or removing objects to avoid muscle sprains & strains.
- 4) Items stored overhead shall not overhang the shelf
- 5) Overhead shelving should have a lip on the outer edge to prevent items from sliding or rolling off the shelf.

Life Safety - [NFPA 13, 29CFR1910.159(C)10] Most of our facilities have sprinklers. Sprinklers are typically heat activated devices that release water at a predetermined density and pattern to adequately contain the spread of a fire based on known hazards until the occupants can safely evacuate the building and the fire department arrives to extinguish the fire. Storage on upper shelving too close to sprinkler heads can obstruct and/or block the water flow preventing the containment of the fire. This can increase the likelihood of damage and possible loss of life.

NFPA requires an 18” zone of clearance in ALL DIRECTIONS around and below a sprinkler head.

By maintaining the prescribed 3 dimensional clearance the sprinkler water flow will release in the desired pattern, density and achieve the proper overlap of water with adjacent sprinkler heads to inundate the entire area and suppress the fire.

Remember - Shelving should be adequately designed, installed and used to prevent an injury. Improper storage of materials on the top shelf could affect sprinkler activation and fire suppression. If in doubt contact the Facilities Department to perform an inspection.