



LABORATORY HOUSEKEEPING

Poor housekeeping is a contributing factor associated with accidents and fires in labs. Follow these best practices for fire safety and prevention.

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.

CLEANING THE LAB

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.
- Recycle paper and cardboard properly where it will be promptly removed.
- Unused or spare equipment should be stored in a designated storage room.
- Contact EH&S to [dispose of waste chemicals](#).
- [Recycle chemicals](#) you no longer use in [MyChem](#).

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.

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/shower

If this equipment is not in your lab, know where it is located.

Contact EH&S at 206.543.7262 or ehsdept@uw.edu for more information.