

Office Fire Safety Guidelines

The following guidelines have been developed by the Environmental Health & Safety Department of Pace University. Should you have any questions related to the office safety guidelines, please contact our department at 2-2818.

Identification of Potential Fire Hazards

- Ignition Sources – A safe clearance between combustible materials and ignition sources such as light fixtures, heaters and flame-producing devices to be maintained. For specific requirements look under basic Fire Prevention Strategies.
- Open Flames – Candles or any open flames are prohibited.
- Smoking – Smoking is prohibited in facilities owned or leased by Pace University. Outdoors, discarded smoking materials carelessly tossed in waste containers or into landscaping can easily start a fire. Use approved waste containers to discard all smoking materials properly.
- Miscellaneous Combustible – The management of combustible materials storage in buildings will reduce the risk of fire.
- Storage – Materials should be stored in such a way that they will not obstruct the fire suppression sprinkler heads.
- Electrical Safety – All lighting and surge protectors (extension cords are prohibited) should bear the appropriate Underwriters Laboratories  LISTED tags.

Basic Fire Prevention Requirements

- Accumulation of Combustible Materials – The excessive accumulation of combustible materials (such as cardboard boxes, magazine/journals and paper products) is prohibited. Combustible material must never be stored any closer than 36" from a heating appliance, electrical light, or heat source. Items no longer in use should be properly disposed to avoid stacking and accumulation on counters, top of cabinets, floors and desks.
- Plastic and Foam Items – The storage and use of foam or plastic cups, utensils, etc. close to heat sources should not be allowed. These materials are combustibles and can quickly start a fire. Plastic foam also burns rapidly and gives off dense toxic black smoke.
- Material Storage; Ceiling Clearance –
 - 24 inches of clearance in non-sprinklered buildings is strictly required for ceiling clearance to allow manual hose streams of water to effectively reach the top of a burning piles and any adjunct storage.
 - 18 inches of clearance is required in sprinklered areas to allow the even distribution of water to the storage.
- Means of Egress – Combustible materials cannot be stored in corridors or egress paths that could jeopardize the safety of occupants leaving the building.
- Decorations – Decorations, signs and other items should not be hung on sprinkler heads and piping.

- Obstruction of Safety Equipment – Access to portable fire extinguishers and other safety equipment should not be obstructed by other equipment, furniture or miscellaneous storage. Extinguishers must be clearly visible and easily accessible.
- Hoarding – Hoarding increases the risk of fire and possible structural damage due to increased weight loading on floors. Maintain premises free of unneeded and unnecessary combustible materials. Utilize deep storage or properly discard unused items being stockpiled or hoarded.
- Clear Passage – Keep passageways clear of obstacles, including furniture, trash, misc. storage and equipment.

Electrical Safety

- Use of Extension Cords and Multiple Plug Adapters –
 - Multiple plug adapters without over-current protection are not permitted.
 - Extension cords may only be used for temporary operations and must never be used as permanent wiring. Examples of temporary use would include housekeepers using a vacuum cleaner and portable AV equipment. Using the right size extension cord for the equipment being used is required.
 - Flexible cords and cables--including extension cords--must be protected from accidental damage, as might be caused, for example, by sharp corners, projections, and doorways or other pinch points. They may not be run through holes in wall, ceilings or floors, attached to building surfaces, or run concealed behind walls, floors or above ceilings.
 - Power strips with circuit breaker protection and 3 to 20 foot cords may be used in place of residential extension cords. Each power strip must be plugged directly into the wall outlet. The Fire Code prohibits "daisy" chaining power strips into one another.
- Electric Space Heaters – If B&G has issues maintaining a specific temperature in a given location, they may provide an electric space heater for the work area. This is the only circumstance in which space heaters will be permitted.
 - Space heaters provided will have tip over automatic safety cut-offs and wiring in good condition.
 - 3 feet clearance is required around the heater. Placing a space heater near or in contact with combustible materials can be a fire hazard and is prohibited.
- Portable Fans – Small portable fans help improve ventilation in an area. They can also pose a fire hazard if placed near combustible materials, around flammable liquids or where the blades of the fan can easily catch items. Make sure wiring on fans is not damaged and complies with the National Electrical code.
- Wiring, Switches and Plugs – Overloaded circuits, damaged wiring and defective switches and outlets can all lead to electrical fires. Inspect all wiring, switches and plugs. Report any damage found to Buildings & Grounds and have a qualified electrician make any repairs necessary before using.
- Electrical Outlets – All electrical outlets are required to have proper cover plates in place at all times. If a cover plate is found missing, report it to Buildings & Grounds to have the hazard corrected.

- Lighting Fixtures – Report any problems with lighting fixtures to Buildings & Grounds immediately. Storage must be at least 3 feet below overhead light fixtures.

Miscellaneous Safety Items

- Walking Surfaces –
 - Aisles should be clearly established, not obstructed, and a clear pathway for egress maintained.
 - Walking surfaces should be clear of any materials that are low to the ground, where they may present a tripping hazard.
 - Carpets and rugs should be secured to prevent slipping or tripping.
- Bookcases, Shelves and Cabinets –
 - Shelves should not be overloaded.
 - Heavy storage cabinets, file cabinets, and bookcases should be secured to the wall to prevent tipping.
 - Only one drawer should be opened at a time to prevent the cabinets from tipping over.
 - File drawers should be kept closed when not in use to prevent a tripping hazard.
 - Items should not be stacked too high. The heaviest and largest items should be on the bottom.
 - Appropriate step stools in good condition should be utilized when items are stored at a height out of reach. Individuals should not stand on chairs, tables, boxes or other equipment.
- Office Furniture – Chairs should be in good condition and adjusted such that the individual may sit comfortably at the worktable or desk to help prevent back strain and repetitive strain injuries.