

## GUIDELINE 20. PENN BUILDING CODE COMPLIANCE

### 1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1** To establish a guideline for the safe planning and implementation of office fire safety taking place within the University of Pennsylvania's campus.

### 2.0 RESPONSIBILITY

#### 2.1 Identification of Potential Fire Hazards

- 2.1.1** Light fixtures, heaters, and flame-producing devices are to be maintained.
- 2.1.2** Open Flames – candles or any open flames are prohibited.
- 2.1.3** Ignition Sources – maintain a safe clearance between combustible materials and ignition sources.
- 2.1.4** Miscellaneous Combustible – management of combustible materials storage in buildings will reduce the risk of fire.
- 2.1.5** Storage – materials should be stored in such a way that they will not obstruct the fire suppression sprinkler heads.
- 2.1.6** Electrical Safety – all lighting and surge protectors should bear the appropriate Underwriters Laboratories listed tags.

### 3.1 PROCEDURES

#### 3.1 Basic Fire Prevention Requirements

- 3.1.1 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.
- 3.1.2 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.
- 3.1.3 Material Storage Ceiling Clearance**
  - 3.1.3.1** 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.
  - 3.1.3.2** 18 inches of clearance is required in sprinklered areas to allow the even distribution of water to the storage.
- 3.1.4 Means of Egress** – Combustible materials cannot be stored in corridors or egress paths that could jeopardize the safety of occupants leaving the building.
- 3.1.5 Decorations** – Decorations, signs and other items should not be hung on sprinkler heads and piping.
- 3.1.6 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.

- 3.1.7 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.
- 3.1.8 Clear Passage** – Keep passageways clear of obstacles, including furniture, trash, storage, and equipment.

### **3.2 Electrical Safety**

#### **3.2.1 Use of Extension Cords and Multiple Plug Adapters:**

- 3.2.1.1** Multiple plug adapters without over-current protection are not permitted.
- 3.2.1.2** 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.
- 3.2.1.3** 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.
- 3.2.1.4** Power strips with circuit breaker protection and 3-to-20-foot cords may use 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.

#### **3.2.2 Electric Space Heaters** – Please see Safety Guideline #8 Portable Electric Heaters

#### **3.2.3 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.

#### **3.2.4 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 your buildings operation office or Building Administrator.

#### **3.2.5 Electrical Outlets** – All electrical outlets are required to always have proper cover plates in place. If a cover plate is found missing, report it to your buildings operation office or Building Administrator to have the hazard corrected.

#### **3.2.6 Lighting Fixtures** – Report any problems with lighting fixtures to your buildings operation office or Building Administrator immediately. Storage must be at least 3 feet below overhead light fixtures.

### **3.3 Miscellaneous Safety Items**

#### **3.3.1 Walking Surfaces**

- 3.3.1.1** Aisles should be clearly established, not obstructed, and a clear pathway for egress maintained, with at least 28", or more may be required due to occupancy.
- 3.3.1.2** Walking surfaces should be clear of any materials that are low to the ground, where they may present a tripping hazard.
- 3.3.1.3** Carpets and rugs should be secured to prevent slipping or tripping.

#### **3.3.2 Bookcases, Shelves and Cabinets**

- 3.3.2.1** Shelves should not be overloaded.

- 3.3.2.2** Heavy storage cabinets, file cabinets, and bookcases should be secured to the wall to prevent tipping.
- 3.3.2.3** Only one drawer should be opened at a time to prevent the cabinets from tipping over.
- 3.3.2.4** File drawers should be kept closed when not in use to prevent a tripping hazard.
- 3.3.2.5** Items should not be stacked too high. The heaviest and largest item should be on the bottom.
- 3.3.2.6** 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.

**3.3.3 Office Furniture**

- 3.3.3.1** 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.

**3.4 Office Inspection**

- 3.4.1** To request an office inspection, fill out **Appendix 15.0: Penn Building Code Compliance Inspection** and send it to [FES@publicsafety.upenn.edu](mailto:FES@publicsafety.upenn.edu)

**4.0 References**

- 4.1 Philadelphia Fire Code: 1018.3 Aisles**

**5.0 CONTACT INFORMATION**

- 5.1** For question regarding this guideline contact Fire and Emergency Services at (215) 573-7857 or [FES@publicsafety.upenn.edu](mailto:FES@publicsafety.upenn.edu)