

Physical Safety Advice for Stores Areas – October 2022

Important Information regarding Manual Handling and Workplace Safety in Stores Areas

The Safety Office would like to provide University Departments and Institutes with important manual handling and workplace safety advice for Stores¹ areas. The advice applies equally to both large/heavy goods and unusually sized/shaped/hazardous goods being delivered to the Department² and similar shipments leaving the building.

The recommendations are for the attention of DSOs and those staff who are responsible for the management of these areas in their respective Departments and Institutes.

For deliveries Departments and Institutes should ensure the following:

1. If the Department receives large or heavy items (either on pallets or non-palletted): ensure that there is a clear, detailed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in place for Stores personnel (or any other individuals who are assisting) to follow for the safe receipt and unpacking of goods. Any safety advice provided by the manufacturer regarding the handling and unpacking of the goods should be strictly followed and included in the SOP. If there are no instructions provided by the distributor or manufacturer or the instructions provided are not clear, the distributor/manufacturer should be contacted and ask for safety instructions for unpacking the goods safely. Once received these should be added to the Departmental SOP and risk assessment for the task.
2. The Department should ensure that there is good communication between procurement, lab managers, the DSO and Stores management as this contributes to a safe delivery of large/heavy goods or unusually sized/shaped/hazardous goods. Procurement and lab managers should inform DSOs and Stores management at the time of purchase when hazardous goods are ordered. They should ask suppliers for secure unpacking instructions and agree with the supplier a safe delivery and delivery of goods to a pre-agreed location. This information should then be shared with the DSO and Stores manager.
3. The Department should make sure that there is an adequate number of people available to safely carry out the task. The manufacturer's handling and unpacking instructions should also include this information. The task should not be started if there are not enough adequately trained personnel available.
4. The unpacking process of heavy/large/hazardous equipment should be allocated 'protected time'. All personnel should be able to focus on the task and not be distracted. A 'Do not disturb' sign on the Stores door and/or an email to all staff could be used to communicate when a procedure is undertaken and must not be interrupted. Any personnel not directly involved in the task should not be allowed into the area whilst the procedure is in progress, unless required in an emergency situation.
5. During the unpacking process, ensure that there is good communication amongst all personnel involved in the task and everyone understands their own role in the process. There should be a person taking the lead in giving instructions for others to follow.
6. Ensure that the Stores area is always kept free of clutter, such as loose packaging material. If packaging material is generated during the unpacking procedure, remove it from the floor/work

¹ The term 'Stores area' is used in this document for those areas within Departments and Institutes where the delivery, storage and outbound shipment of goods occur.

² Please note that where the term 'Department' is used, it applies to both 'Departments' and 'Institutes'

area at regular intervals and in particular before the delivered goods are further handled (e.g. removal of transport/shipment immobilising devices; transfer of equipment to final site within department). Packaging material left on the floor is a serious trip/slip hazard.

7. Regular inspection of the Stores floor and outside courtyard area should be carried out to ensure that the floor/ground is safe and in good working order for pallet trucks, castor wheels, trolleys, etc. to travel safely over. Protruding edges or holes should be repaired. In particular, the edge where the external delivery area connects with the floor of the Stores area, should be smooth and there should be no dip, dent or 'lip'. If any of these issues develop, please contact Estates Division (University Estates Division, Hospital Trust Estates, etc.) to get the issue assessed and repaired as soon as possible. Further deliveries might need to be stopped if the transport of goods across the damaged area lead to the load becoming unbalanced or unstable. If the damage is not fixed within a reasonable time, please complete a 'Near Miss' report on the online **AssessNET** accident reporting system.
8. Departments should insist that delivery companies use their own equipment when unloading goods from their delivery vehicles. We recommend that Departments refrain from allowing the use of Departmental equipment (pallet trucks or other moving equipment) to unload delivery vehicles. Delivery drivers should arrive with their own equipment for unloading. Staff have the right to refuse deliveries if either the packaged goods themselves (to be delivered) or the chosen method of delivery of the delivery drivers are assessed and deemed unsafe by the person responsible for the Stores area. The same right applies if a consignment arrives outside the agreed delivery time (too late/early in the day) and that would result in an insufficient number of trained staff being available to receive the goods.
9. Departments must ensure that the right equipment is available for staff to move heavy items, e.g. pallet trucks, forklifts (manual or electric) and that personnel are trained in their correct use.
10. Departments must ensure that all staff working in Stores are supplied with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) that have been identified as control measures in risk assessments (e.g. safety shoes, gloves, safety cutting knives, etc.)
11. Should the need arise for other personnel from other work areas to assist with manual handling tasks within the Stores area, then the department must ensure that the assisting personnel have received the relevant training, have 'read and understood' the relevant risk assessments and have been provided with all PPE according to the risk assessment.
12. Departments must ensure that there is a risk assessment in place that details the risks associated with each task undertaken when working in Stores and what control measures need to be taken to minimise the risk of injuries. A separate risk assessment should be in place for the unpacking of large/heavy items. Staff responsible for management of safety must ensure that these risk assessments are read and understood by all personnel involved before the task is undertaken and that the risk assessments are reviewed regularly. If a delivery arrives in slightly different packaging than usual then the risk assessment for unpacking that delivery must be reviewed to ensure it is still fit for purpose. The need for a dynamic risk assessment must be considered if the unpacking task is novel or unusual.
13. Departments must ensure that all Stores personnel are trained in Manual Handling and that regular refresher training takes place.
14. Departments should review their First Aid arrangements for this particularly high-risk work area. Stores should have good communication devices to call for a First Aider, or better still: staff working in these areas should be First Aid trained. There should be a First Aid box available in the close vicinity. If no First Aider is available on site then significantly high risk tasks, for example involving heavy equipment should not be completed at that time.

15. Departments should ensure that only authorised personnel are present in the Stores area including the external yard area to facilitate safe working around vehicles. Keep other personnel away from the work area, in particular during movement of vehicles/trucks and delivery.

For shipment of heavy/large goods or unusually sized/shaped/hazardous goods from the Department/Institute:

16. Departments should ensure that Stores management (as well as the DSO, Facility Manager) are informed well ahead of time when large/heavy goods or unusually sized/shaped/hazardous goods are shipped from the Department. This allows Stores personnel to prepare themselves to handle the goods safely and in compliance with legal requirements where these apply: to allocate the appropriate number of trained staff and to allocate a time for the activity to take place.
17. Departments should ensure that there is a plan in place for any complex/hazardous shipment/transport. This would apply for example to moves of laboratories between buildings/sites, shipment of hazardous waste or broken equipment for repair/disposal. The writing of additional SOPs and dynamic risk assessments as well as to operate dynamically is important. The plan should also include an alternative procedure ('Plan B') if it can be reasonably foreseen that 'Plan A' might not work.
18. The Department should ensure where large/heavy equipment or unusually sized/shaped/hazardous goods is leaving the Department that an agreement (e.g. with the delivery/courier company) is in place specifying who is responsible for the packing, movement of the item within the building and for the loading of the item onto the vehicle. This agreement should be made available to and discussed with Stores management before any shipment date/time is agreed.
19. The same safety recommendations as described in paragraphs 1 to 15 apply for the shipment of these goods.

If there are any queries, please contact the Safety Office:

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