

U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Academy

Coffee Break Training

Topic: Housekeeping

Learning objective: The student shall be able to identify housekeeping conditions that need correction.

An occupancy's housekeeping practices often reflect the owner's attitude toward fire safety.

This photograph was taken of a storage area beneath exit stairs in a large convention center with an occupant capacity of several thousand persons. The accumulation and variety of combustibles in a small space is surprising.

Look closely and you will see ordinary combustible materials, a paint can that may contain a flammable or combustible liquid, cleaning chemicals, two pressure vessels of refrigerant gases, and two portable welding kits that contain oxidizing and flammable gases.

If you look even more closely, you will see the edge of a hot water tank in the lower left-hand side of the picture that could be an ignition source for any of these items.

The model fire codes require that combustible storage in buildings be orderly and separated from heaters or heating devices by distance or shielding so ignition cannot occur. The codes also prohibit storage in mechanical rooms or electrical rooms.

In nonsprinklered buildings, storage should be arranged so it is at least 24 inches (610 mm) below the ceiling, and in sprinklered buildings at least 18 inches (457 mm) below the level of the sprinkler deflectors.

This circumstance should be brought to the attention of building management to have this hazardous condition corrected.

For additional information refer to International Fire Code®, Chapter 3, and NFPA 1, Uniform Fire Code®, Chapter 10.



The variety of hazards in this photograph are almost too numerous to mention.