



UNIVERSITY OF  
NOTRE DAME

RISK MANAGEMENT AND SAFETY

## SHELF STORAGE & STACKING

Preventing injuries starts with how we store items. Improperly stacked or poorly stored materials may seem harmless, but they're one of the most common causes of workplace injuries. Falling items, blocked exits, and overloaded shelving can create serious safety hazards and increase the risk of accidents. Practicing safe storage habits not only prevents injuries and property damage, but it also improves workflow, keeps emergency access points clear, and makes it easier to find what you need, especially in a crisis. Whether you're working in an office, lab, storage room, or facility area, safe stacking and shelf storage are essential to maintaining a safe and organized environment for everyone on campus.



### WHY IT MATTERS

When storage is done right, most people don't notice because everything works smoothly. But when it's done wrong, the consequences can be immediate and dangerous. Items that are stacked too high, too heavy, or unevenly can fall and cause injuries. Materials stored in front of exits or emergency equipment can delay response during an emergency. Safe storage isn't just about neatness; it's about protecting people, property, and productivity every day.



### KEY ELEMENTS

Effective shelf storage is more than stacking boxes. It involves thoughtful planning, proper equipment, and regular upkeep. Start by choosing storage systems that are appropriate for the weight, size, and type of materials being stored. Make sure shelving units are secured to prevent tipping, and organize items in a way that prioritizes accessibility and safety. Storage areas should be marked, with designated zones for specific materials. Build good habits by training staff on safe storage practices and conducting routine checks to catch risks early. By treating storage as part of your safety culture, not just an afterthought, you help create a space that's both functional and hazard-free.

### STAYING SAFE

Every storage space, whether it's an office, lab, mechanical room, or storage closet, should follow these core practices:

- ✓ Heaviest items on the bottom
- ✓ Lighter or fragile items up top
- ✓ Keep walkways, aisles, and exits clear
- ✓ Secure items that might tip or roll
- ✓ Label and organize materials for quick access
- ✓ Store flammable materials in fire
- ✓ Avoid exceeding the weight limits of shelves
- ✓ Avoid overhanging items or unstable piles
- ✓ Never block electrical panels, fire extinguishers, or emergency equipment

### FINAL TAKEAWAY

Safe stacking and storage might seem simple, but it plays a big role in keeping our campus safe. Taking a few extra moments to store items properly helps prevent injuries, protects equipment, and ensures clear access during emergencies. Stay alert, follow safe practices, and help create a workspace where safety and organization go hand in hand.