

# FDN(wh)Y Me?



As an aid to laboratories in avoiding FDNY Violation Orders (VO) and Summonses (SUM), EH&S distributes monthly FDNY inspection findings which resulted in a VO or SUM citation to an actual laboratory on either the Morningside or Medical Center campus. These real-life scenarios are meant to assist the research community in ensuring that such conditions do not exist in Columbia University laboratories.

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## Proper Housekeeping in Laboratories

A Fire Department of New York City (FDNY) permit is required to maintain or operate all laboratories or other spaces in which more than 1-gallon of flammable or combustible liquid or 75 standard cubic feet (SCF) of flammable gas are handled, stored, or used in testing, research, experimental or instructional work. To obtain a permit and maintain the appropriate stipulations for a permit, laboratories must adhere to all applicable fire safety regulations. FDNY conducts regular inspections in permitted laboratories to ensure compliance. During a recent FDNY inspection, the FDNY Inspector issued multiple Violations Orders due to housekeeping deficiencies, obstruction of means of egress, and the presence of excessive combustible materials. These conditions result in violations because –

- Obstructing means of egress presents a serious danger to laboratory occupants as it can hinder the ability to make a quick exit in the event of an emergency.
- In the event of a fire, excess combustible materials can ignite and exacerbate the situation.

The importance of proper housekeeping and maintenance of a laboratory's physical conditions can be easily be overlooked. To assist the research community, EH&S conducts FDNY inspection preparedness surveys to proactively identify fire hazards and safety concerns such as poor housekeeping in advance of the FDNY inspections. During a preparedness survey, an EH&S Safety Advisor will observe and flag any housekeeping issues, which include, but are not limited to – egress obstructions, accumulation of combustible items, and safety equipment such as fire extinguishers, eyewash stations, and emergency showers that are rendered inaccessible due to blockage.

Please note, the FDNY Laboratory Inspection Unit is on-site weekly at the Morningside and Irving Medical Center campuses. For a consultation before the FDNY inspector gets around to your lab, or for any question, concern, or help, please contact an EH&S Safety Advisor. <https://research.columbia.edu/safety-advisor-team>