

Warehouse Safety and Security

When establishing any warehouse or storage facility, adequate physical security measures must be enacted. In humanitarian contexts, relief supplies are incredibly attractive to thieves – often humanitarian supplies are in short supply and the chaotic environments and limited infrastructure make theft frequent and hard to trace. Additionally, the overall operating environment may make responding to injuries caused in the workplace difficult. Aid agencies should have solid measures in place ensure a safe and secure workplace for stored items and workers.

Perimeter Security - Storage facilities should have in-tact perimeter walls or fences. The perimeters should not have any gaps or holes, and be high enough and sturdy enough to sufficiently prevent casual thefts or easy access. The perimeter areas should be as shaped as regular as possible to avoid potential blind spots where unauthorised access may occur. If possible, sufficient perimeter lights should be installed, and should function throughout the entire night.

Guard Service - The warehouse ideally should have some form of guard service, either privately managed or sub-contracted through a third-party company. Guard services should have sufficient numbers to cover all hours of the day and night with regular 8-10 hour shifts. Having one or a few live-in guards may mean guards reach fatigue and/or won't be alert at all times, especially throughout the night. Any guard service should also control the flow of visitors and vehicles through use of sign in/out sheets, and possibly even the need to ask for permission before letting outsiders in. Guards should also perform routine perimeter checks, looking to see if doors have been compromised, and responding to any suspicious noise or activities.

Fire Suppression – Warehouse and storage facilities of all sizes should have a fire suppression plan in place. Larger facilities may have professionally installed smoke detector and sprinkler systems in place. Sprinkler systems should be regularly inspected by a licensed company, and in compliance with national laws where required. Smaller or remote warehouses may not have the infrastructure or the available utilities to support an advanced fire suppression system, and should be outfitted with basic fire-fighting tools.

Irrespective of the warehouse space, fire extinguishers should be readily available. Fire extinguishers should be clearly visible to the eye, easily accessible, and be placed at least every 25 meters or closer if required by local regulations. Extinguishers should be inspected every 30 days to ensure the pressure valve reads as in the workable range, and that the canister does not display symptoms of rust or corrosion, and that the hoses are not split or damaged. At least once a year, extinguishers should be pressure tested. If at any time extinguishers do not pass inspection, they should be recharged or replaced as necessary. Consult the owner manuals or supplier for proper gauge readings.

At bare minimum, class A extinguishers should be placed throughout the storage space at the correct intervals, and class B extinguishers should be stored near any place reactive substances or flammable liquid such as fuel are stored. Many field locations will also use what are known as “sand buckets” – buckets pre-filled with sand and stationed throughout the facility to also enable rapid suppression of a fire. Both are recommended for remote locations where water may be scarce and proper maintenance of extinguishers may be difficult.

Fire Extinguisher Classes Per Region:

American	European	UK	Australian/Asian	Fuel/Heat Source
Class A	Class A	Class A	Class A	Ordinary combustibles
Class B	Class B	Class B	Class B	Flammable liquids
	Class C	Class C	Class C	Flammable gases
Class C	Unclassified	Unclassified	Class E	Electrical equipment
Class D	Class D	Class D	Class D	Combustible metals
Class K	Class F	Class F	Class F	Kitchen Grade (Cooking oil or fat)

Occupational Safety – Warehouse workers should be instructed and encouraged to engage occupational safety in any situation where storage is required. Occupational safety includes:

- High visibility vests worn by warehouse workers and visitors as needed.
- Warehouse workers have sufficient and adequate breaks.
- MHE is properly maintained, and support equipment such as ladders is not compromised or damaged.
- Staff who operate MHE are trained and/or certified for that equipment where required.
- Stocked first aid kits available on site.
- Warehouse workers wear proper protective equipment equivalent to the required working conditions, including gloves, hard hats/helmets, close toed safety shoes, ear and eye protection as required.
- Fire exits are clearly marked.
- Lanes for movement of MHE are clearly marked on the floor.

Situational Safety – As the storage site is established, agency security personnel conduct periodic reviews and follow incidents accordingly. Safety and security assessments of the warehouse and the surrounding areas should be conducted at least once a year, and security incidents occurring on site or in the immediate area should be properly reported in a timely manner.