

Safe use of cold rooms

1. Contents

1. Contents.....	1
2. Scope of Policy	1
3. Hazards associated with cold rooms.....	1
4. Usage guidelines	1

2. Scope of Policy

This document outlines the local rules applied to the use of all walk-in cold rooms on the 5th floor of the West Wing (rooms 05-66-31, 05-66-33 and 05-66-36). All Users must ensure they are fully aware of the risks associated when working within the cold rooms and understand the appropriate actions to take before they begin.

3. Hazards associated with cold rooms

The hazards associated with working in the Cold Rooms are summarised below:

- **Temperature**: Cold rooms run at approx. 4°C and as such prolonged exposure to this temperature without appropriate protective equipment could lead to hypothermia. However the expected usage of these rooms is unlikely to cause any problems.
- **Electrical Equipment**: When used in a cold room, condensation may get inside the enclosure of electrical equipment. This could lead to 'short circuiting' across the electrical components, making the equipment inherently unsafe. Provided equipment is stringently monitored and kept to a minimum then this risk should be controlled.
- **Microbial growth**: It is likely that mould may grow on surfaces within the cold rooms. If this is not controlled then the risk to the health of the users and also the effect on the users work could be considerable. Therefore stringent monitoring and cleaning, by all staff, is an absolute requirement to keep this risk to an acceptable level.
- **Work at height**: Access to the top shelf may be required for storage. The top height of this shelf is approx. 190cm. Access to the shelf is via a 'Kick-step'. Provided this shelf is only used to store items less than 5Kgs and do not require regular access, then the associated risk should be minimal.
- **Trapped personnel**: there is a trapped person alarm button within the cold room, if triggered, this will activate an alarm which Bouygues will either relay to Facilities team during core hours or attend to.

The most likely incidents to occur are from mould contamination to the room. By following the guidelines set out below, this can be controlled so that the associated risk to the user is minimal.

In exceptional circumstances though, the most serious incident that could occur, would be electrical burns or shocks to the user. However once again as long as the following rules are applied then the likelihood of this happening is low and so the associated risk is minimal.

4. Usage guidelines

NDCN Laboratory Safety Policy 0006: **Local Rules For the Use Of Cold Rooms.**

- Storage of cardboard or polystyrene boxes must be kept to an absolute minimum.
- Where this cannot be avoided then items should be over packed into plastic storage boxes with lids.
- All shelves, boxes and materials used by the group must be labelled with their Group Name or contacts.
- Any spillage must be dealt with immediately & appropriately (See West Wing Waste & Disinfection Policy).
- Facilities team will arrange for the floor & bench tops to be cleaned & disinfected (at least once every 6 months).
- Groups & Users must routinely clean & disinfect their shelving, boxes & other materials they utilise within the rooms (at least once every 6 months).
- Electrical Equipment used within the room must have been PAT Tested before it is taken into the room.
- Electrical Equipment must be visually checked each time it is used for obvious signs of defects such as loose cable grips, plugs incorrectly fitted, unsafe cable joints, damaged cable, signs of burning/overheating, wrong value fuses (remember Amps=Watts/Volts). If any potential problem is identified then the equipment must be taken out of use immediately and facilities@ndcn.ox.ac.uk should be contacted for further advice.
- Plugs to electrical equipment must be able to fit into the Damp-proof sockets allowing them to close fully. If this isn't the case then facilities@ndcn.ox.ac.uk should be contacted to change the plug before use.
- If electrical equipment is removed from the cold rooms, then it should be allowed to warm up and any condensation should be dried out before using, this can take several hours.
- Where possible, only low voltage equipment should be used within the rooms.
- No item greater than 3Kgs is allowed to be stored on the top shelves.
- Access to the top shelves must be via a Kick-Step.
- Items stored on the top shelves should only require access on a limited basis.
- All hazardous items within the cold room must be stored correctly and appropriately labelled.
- The Departmental Safety Officer will routinely check that the emergency exit handles function correctly in all rooms (at least once every 6 months).