

Collection Policy and Procedure Guidelines for Hazardous Materials in the Collection

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Hazardous materials are defined as materials that can potentially pose a danger to the collection, staff or general public.

Common examples that might be found in a museum's collection include, but are not limited to, pharmaceutical, cleaning supplies, asbestos, nitrate film, commercial or industrial chemicals, radioactive materials, fire suppressants, etc.

A museum should have documentation on how to deal with hazardous materials in their collection policy and procedures manual. The collection policy should have a general overview of how to deal with the intake, assessment, cleaning, loaning, and deaccessioning of these materials. The procedures manual should have a detailed instruction on how this is to be done within your institution.

Collection Policy

Below are examples of wording to cover each section of the collection policy as it relates to hazardous materials.

Intake and Assessment

An object, specimen, or digital file will not be acquired when they contain materials that are hazardous to staff, the public or the collection and that cannot be removed in a safe manner or is cost prohibitive for the museum to do so.

Cleaning

Artifacts will be handled, stored, and cleaned according to Community Museums standards (Reg 877 R.R.O. 1990) and in accordance with the museum procedure manual.

Deaccessioning

Artifacts will be considered for deaccession if they pose a threat or risk to the museum collection, staff, or the public.

Outgoing Loans

The curator must approve all loans of artifacts. Loans can only be made if the artifacts are deemed safe for transport, handling, and public display. The borrowing institution is responsible for the on-loan materials and will transport, handle, store, exhibit and manage these materials according to professional standards.

Collection Procedure

Two flow charts have been included to show the minimum best practice steps a museum should follow when assessing and cleaning hazardous materials. These are meant to help museums develop their own procedures for dealing with artifacts that contain hazardous materials, based on the museum's size and resources.

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