

NDMRB-POL-009

Use of cold rooms

1.0 Introduction

Working in cold rooms is acceptable, however, there are risks associated with working at low temperatures for a length of time. The document aims to provide guidance to end users to work in a safe manner. Most cold rooms run at approximately 4°C and without relevant PPE hypothermia is a real risk.

Special consideration must be given to any electrical equipment which is to be used in cold rooms. This is due to condensation build-up which could lead to 'short circuiting' across the electrical components thus making the equipment inherently un-safe – strict monitoring of any equipment being used should minimise this risk. It is most important to keep the cold room clean and mould free. It is accepted that mould will grow in the cold rooms but this must be controlled and kept to a minimum. This is to ensure that the risks to health and users work are kept to a minimum. When removing items from a shelf higher than 190cm, users must use a step to reach them and only if they weigh less than 5Kg's. It is advised to store items that do weigh more than 5Kg's are stored at a lower and easier to access level.

2.0 Guidelines for safe cold room usage

1. 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.
2. All shelves, boxes and materials used by the group must be labelled with their Group Name or contacts.
3. Any spillage must be dealt with immediately & appropriately
4. The relevant Laboratory manager must routinely arrange for the floor & bench tops to be cleaned & disinfected (at least once every 3 months).
 - a. In the TDI there is a cleaning rota which must be followed and signed off; each group is responsible for ensuring that the cold room is cleaned on the relevant weeks.
 - b. The benches must be wiped down immediately in the event of a spill and must be wiped down after each use. The benches should be wiped down with 70% ethanol as a minimum.
 - c. There is a broom, mop, dustpan and brush in the freezer room that may be used for cleaning purposes

5. Groups & Users must routinely clean & disinfect their shelving, boxes & other materials they utilise. They must routinely carry out a disposal of old samples ect, this should be at least once every 6 months.
6. Electrical Equipment used within the room must have been PAT Tested before it is taken into the room and when it is removed.
7. 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 the relevant group head or lab manager must be contacted for further advice.
8. Plugs to electrical equipment must be able to fit into the **Damp-proof sockets** allowing them to close fully. If this is not the case then the plug must be changed before the equipment can be used. Where possible only low voltage equipment should be used within the rooms.
9. If electrical equipment is removed from the cold rooms, then they should be allowed to warm up & dry out before using – This could take several hours.
10. No item greater than 5Kgs is allowed to be stored on the top shelf. Access to the top shelf must be via a Kik-Step. Items stored on the top shelf should only require access on a limited basis.
11. All hazardous items within the cold room must be stored correctly & appropriately labelled.
12. Because the cold room is accessed on a regular basis there is no requirement for monthly checks of the door handle by the facilities team. However, this means that any change in the operation of the door handle must be reported to the lab manager or buildings manager by end users.

2.1 Leaving equipment running in the cold room

- Ensure that the equipment used is compliant with the earlier mentioned PAT testing guidelines
- Ensure that the plug is labelled so it is clear which plug is powering what equipment
- Leave a sign on the equipment indicating that it must not be turned off, a contact name and a contact number.

2.2 Emergency procedures and lone working

In the event of you becoming incapacitated or trapped by mechanical failure you must activate the alarm by depressing the alarm activation buttons (situated at normal height and floor height). This will alert security services who will come to your aid. You must complete a risk assessment of the work you are carrying out in the

cold room and a risk assessment for the work if it is carried out outside of core working hours (8am – 6pm)

3.0 Review

The information in this document will be reviewed and amended if necessary every 3 years by the laboratory manager or alternative relevant personnel.

4.0 Risk Assessment

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5.0 References

- WTCHG Guidance Note: Correct use of Cold Rooms