

U.S. Fire Administration / National Fire Academy

Coffee Break Training

Topic: Hazardous Materials: Mercantile Display

Learning objective: The student shall be able to identify when mercantile shelf storage and display of hazardous materials requires a lip or guard for individual containers.

Many of the consumer products we use qualify as hazardous materials. Unfortunately, because of customer familiarity with the products, retailers, shippers, and users often don't recognize the seriousness of the hazard that exists.

Shelf storage in retail display can be a particular problem for hazardous materials (especially liquids) that are easily displaced or spilled. If the containers are not placed on the shelves with attention to stability, vibration or seismic activity may cause the containers to fall to the floor.



Codes require that shelves used for hazardous materials in retail display be of substantial construction that is adequately braced and anchored in accordance with the building codes. Shelves should be treated, coated, or made from materials that are compatible with the hazardous materials.

A lip or guard across the shelf front is required when the storage amount exceeds the hazardous materials permit amount specified by the codes. The inspector will have to research both the class of hazardous material and the permit amount before applying the lip or guard requirement.

For additional information, refer to *International Fire Code*[®], Chapter 27; or *NFPA 1, Uniform Fire Code*[™], Chapter 60.