

# THRIFT STORE OPERATIONS: PREMISES SAFETY

Religious organizations commonly operate thrift stores to help raise funds for their organization. The National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops (NARTS) estimates there are over 15,000 thrift stores across the country. Furthermore, according to the NARTS, approximately 16 - 18% of Americans will shop at a thrift store in 2018.

Many consumers shop at thrift stores due to the reduced prices and potential for finding rare and antique items. With the heavy amounts of foot traffic and inventory, however, there is an increased risk for slip and fall claims.

## Safety Hazards

Wet or slippery floors, inadequate lighting, and clutter in walkways can pose slip, trip, and fall hazards. As a thrift-store owner or manager, it is essential to practice good housekeeping and perform routine safety inspections and maintenance throughout the store, including the sales floor, employee areas, and drop off areas. Consider the following recommendations to help maintain a hazard-free premises and reduce the likelihood for slips, trips, and falls at your store.

## General Safety Recommendations

1. Maintain wide aisles to prevent overcrowding
2. Keep aisles free of trip hazards (i.e., clutter, boxes, extension cords)
3. Do not leave ladders, rolling racks, or other handling equipment on the sales floor
4. Ensure flooring is in good condition
5. Keep walking surfaces free of hazards such as sharp or protruding objects, loose boards, corrosion, leaks, spills, snow, and ice
6. Place non-slip/ water-absorbent mats near entrances and other areas where water, ice, or snow may drip or be tracked onto the floor
7. Clean spills immediately and utilize "wet floor" signs when applicable
8. Provide adequate lighting in all areas (inside and outside)
9. Replace burned-out light bulbs immediately
10. Ensure emergency exits are illuminated and accessible
11. Ensure handrails, stair rail systems, and guardrail systems are secured in place



## Merchandise and Displays

Merchandise and displays can present trip hazards and cause injury. If improperly assembled or anchored, displays and shelving units may tip. Additionally, merchandise placed on high or overhead shelving

can fall and cause injury or further tripping hazards. Consider the following recommendations to prevent injury from falling objects/items.

1. Fully stock end caps to prevent tripping over empty displays
2. Anchor display and shelving units to avoid tipping
3. Anchor heavy merchandise (i.e., furniture and large appliances)
4. Do not store loose merchandise on high shelves
5. Place heavy items on bottom shelves

## Employee/Volunteer Safety

In addition to their customers, thrift store owners and managers must ensure a safe environment for their employees and volunteers. Employees and volunteers frequently handle and move merchandise, whether receiving donations or placing inventory. Along with those listed above, consider the following recommendations to help ensure the safety of employees and volunteers.

1. Provide a designated area for receiving merchandise/donations
2. Provide lifting aids such as hand trucks and dollies for moving heavy merchandise
3. Keep storage areas neat and organized
4. Arrange storage areas in a manner that minimizes twisting, turning, and overreaching
5. Do not let stacked boxes lean or overhang the shelving
6. Keep aisles, stairs, and working areas clear of merchandise, objects, and debris
7. Ensure storage racks and shelving are secure, stable, and suitable to prevent the risk of objects falling
8. Ensure there are safe means to access merchandise (i.e., platform steps, ladders)

## CONCLUSION

Thrift-store owners have a responsibility to keep their property in a safe condition. Slips, trips, and falls can happen anywhere. Retail stores can be held liable if they create hazards or fail to prevent known hazards. Thrift-store owners and managers can help ensure the safety of their customers, employees, and volunteers by routinely checking for hazards and eliminating them before an accident occurs.

## REFERENCES:

National Association of Resale and Thrift Shops (NARTS). (2018). Industry statistics and trends. Retrieved from <https://www.narts.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3285>