Manual: Hospital and Hospital Clinics
Chapter: Infection Prevention and Control IC
Topic: Storage - Use of Wooden and Plastic Pallets

Please clarify The Joint Commission's position on the use wooden pallets for storage.

Any examples are for illustrative purposes only.

The Joint Commission has no standard that prohibits wood pallets in clean areas, to include storerooms and supply break-down rooms. Wood pallets that are contaminated should be segregated based on condition, and not introduced to patient care areas or areas that support patient care, like laboratories.

The organization should conduct a risk assessment to determine the appropriateness of having wood pallets within any area of clean storage. Wood pallets should not be used in sterile areas, to include sterile storage areas, since their surfaces are not conducive to the level of cleanliness required in a sterile area; th

prohibition does not apply to sterile supply breakdown areas; plastic pallets would be acceptable in sterile storage areas.

Large quantities of wood pallets should not be used in non-fire sprinklered areas. When conducting the risk assessment, the organization should involve an infection control representative, as well as the primary occupant of the area being evaluated.

Organizations should define their requirements, such as in a policy that addresses the acceptable use of wooden pallets. The organization is expected to adhere to its requirements and evaluate the assessed practice for effectiveness and compliance. The survey process will review the established process for effectiveness and tracer activity will validate proper implementation.

See also: Boxes and Shipping Containers

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