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# STAFF NEWSLETTER

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## Warehouse Logic

HME providers anticipating accreditation typically tell me they think that the warehousing requirements are unattainable within their current building or space. There are many myths about the need for running water (nice to have, but not required); separate doorways for incoming picked-up equipment versus outgoing equipment to be delivered (nice to have, but not required); what level or where in the building equipment is stored---the list goes on.

All accreditation organizations want you to 'Idiot Proof' your equipment warehouse area. By this I mean you shouldn't have to track down an employee to ask what is going on with a particular item sitting there. Is it patient owned or ours? Why is it here if it is patient owned?--Is it broken or being donated to you? Are we keeping it to cannibalize for parts or is it getting returned to the manufacturer? Is it ready for delivery or just off the truck from a pick-up? The location of the item, or written information attached to that item should clearly communicate its status.



There are a variety of ways to achieve this communication. Signage, tape on the floor, specific identified areas, and tagging are a few options.

You want to create a user-friendly, logical flow that supports identification and transition of the equipment through the warehouse. This usually means having an area to hold equipment considered *contaminated-just-off-the-truck* that leads to a *cleaning area* with proper chemicals, safety glasses and gloves. During the cleaning process, simple items like a wheelchair can simultaneously undergo a *function check* (folds, unfolds, rolls, wheel-locks engage, upholstery intact). From here, the equipment may go directly to re-stocking as '*patient ready*' or to the *repair area* for part replacement, or to a specialist who does more in-depth maintenance (respiratory equipment and pumps must be evaluated to verify it meets manufacturer's performance specifications, and documentation of this test and any maintenance performed). A tagging process provides greater detail when your company deals with patient owned or repair services, but is not universally required. If you can 'idiot proof' your inventory so anyone can tell you the status of any equipment within your storage space, you've achieved compliance.

The size of the area is whatever works for your business. It may be just a tiny corner where each item coming back from a rental quickly moves through the cleaning and inspection process to the patient-ready or repair / maintenance area. If you do a lot of wheelchair and scooter repairs, this area will be large. If you outsource all repairs, then the repair area will be small. Avoid long-term storage in the area where equipment first gets off-loaded from the vehicles. Gone are the days of picking it up, storing it dirty and un-inspected, and then dusting off and cleaning the item just before you need to deliver it. You do not need to erect walls separating areas. You may walk past clean equipment on the way to the contaminated equipment area. Equipment that is customer ready should be kept clean by plastic bags or keeping the item in its box.

There is no one, right way for the warehouse to be organized. When you understand what the goals are, you can make just about any space function within the accreditation standards.