



MART Visual Art Studios - Health & Safety Manual & Guidelines

Welcome to MART Visual Art Studios & The MART Gallery Health & Safety Manual & Guidelines document. We have compiled these guidelines to assist you in achieving safe procedures while in your studio or gallery.

Further Reading:

We based this document from the following resources, **please visit** these direct links for further Health & Safety guidelines on how to operate, handle and safely use your studio space: [McMaster University](#), [Visual Artists Ireland](#), [Princeton & United Educators](#), [Crawford IT](#), [EMORY University](#).

**Any studio member, staff, artist or visitor found breaking any of the below guidelines or guidelines mentioned in any of the above linked documents may be asked to leave their studio or gallery with immediate effect.*

The Legislation

If you are self-employed – as most artists are – you are legally bound to provide a safe working environment as set out in the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005. You will find this as well as other health and safety legislative documents on the HSA website. Failure to provide a safe working environment can result in civil cases taken by visitors, fellow studio members or employees (if you employ others to work with you in your studio) or criminal cases taken by the HSA.[\[a\]](#)

Security:

Each of our Studio buildings has its own security, fire and burglar alarm systems, please ensure you are up to date with:

- All sign in and sign out procedures - Members must use the system provided.
- Burglar Alarm System Procedure.
- Fire Alarm and Evacuation Procedure
- Door security.

Communal / Kitchen Areas:

Each of our Studio buildings have its own social/communal areas, kitchens or kitchenettes and toilets. It is all members responsibility to ensure:

- These areas are kept clear of equipment, artwork, debris etc for fire exit emergencies. Anyone found leaving materials / blockages may be found liable of obstructing exits in case of a fire.
- Food & Waste is disposed of correctly
- Out of Date unused food is disposed of.
- All dishes / cutlery is cleaned thoroughly and stored after use.

Heaters / Equipment:

- MART has provided you with a blank checklist template for the back of your door, please fill this out and use it as a checklist of items to switch off or check when leaving your studio each day.
- MART holds a list of restricted equipment which is forbidden in any of our buildings, if you have a question about the safety of any of your equipment please contact a qualified technician or electrician and notify the MART Studio Manager or one of the Directors.
- All heaters should only be turned on when you are in the studio, if you leave for lunch or a meeting or at the end for the day you must ensure to turn off your heater.
- No candles, naked flames are allowed in any of our studios.
- Any equipment using more than the “normal” level of electricity usage must be run past the studio manager for use.
- No Kilns, Heating Presses or similar equipment are allowed in our studios unless otherwise agreed and installed and checked by a certified by an independent electrician, which must give a report to MART.

Basic Guidelines:

- Strictly no fan heaters or super sur gas heaters due to fire risk. If found on premises they will have to be removed immediately.
- No gas, excessive alcohol consumption, flames, smoking, drugs, or firearms are allowed in the building at any time.
- Substitute less hazardous materials or techniques when possible. There are many instances where highly toxic chemicals can be replaced by less toxic materials.
- Know the materials and their hazards. If labels do not provide adequate information regarding contents, hazards, and precautions, use resource books or the internet to research the product - your health is worth the effort.
- Store materials safely. Ensure to use clearly labeled unbreakable containers, and always cover them when not in use to deter their evaporation into the environment. Do not store materials in food containers to avoid accidental ingestion.
- Wear appropriate personal protective equipment such as respirators, face shields, ear muffs, proper footwear and gloves.
- Ensure proper ventilation. To ensure proper ventilation, toxic substances must be placed between an individual and an exhaust fan (where possible). Where open windows (incoming air) and exhaust fans (outgoing air) coexist, the same positioning applies. In this case, however, the window must be kept behind the individual. This is to ensure that the toxic substance is drawn AWAY, and not PAST them.
- Activities involving manual handling and trips and falls are probably the most common cause of workplace accidents. The common risks are associated with manual handling involve the load being too heavy, bad posture when lifting and environment factors such as uneven floors.

Fire Hazard

Probably the hazard that most people are aware of and that which is a hazard in every workplace. Common causes of fire include electrical faults, cooking, smoking and flammable liquids. Obviously, the best control to prevent fire is to isolate the three factors that cause fire – heat, fuel and oxygen. Thus, your studio should be kept neat and tidy to limit potential fuel sources. Ensure sockets are not overloaded and that electrical equipment is in good condition. A smoke detector and fire extinguisher should be installed in your studio.

Electrical

Faulty wiring or appliances are dangerous and potentially lethal. Wiring supplying socket outlets and the socket outlets themselves are only to be worked upon by staff or contractors who have the permission of MART. This does not of course prevent persons from plugging/unplugging or switching appliances on or off at the socket. Special socket outlets are needed in very dusty or wet environments.

When working outside only use appliances which are well insulated against water ingress. Use appliances and extension cables with orange ‘high visibility’ flex.

Always fully unwind an extension cable when using it to supply appliances rated at 1000w or more, this is to avoid overheating. Make sure you are using a correctly rated extension cable for the job. In general it is easiest to use a 13 amp cable for all tasks to avoid overloading.

Sculpture

Many artists who work with traditional sculptural materials including plaster, stone, lapidary, clay, wax, and modeling materials should check out [Princeton's](#) guide for Hazards & Precautions for Sculpture.

- Wear goggles to protect your eyes against stone chips. Wear a respirator. Wear steel-toed shoes to protect your feet.
- If you are using power tools to work stone that contains high concentrations of silica or other hazardous materials, equip your tools with point of- operation local exhaust ventilation. To remove silica dust, wet mop the studio or vacuum with a HEPA-filtered vacuum. Never dry sweep. Applying a fine water spray over your sculpture while carving will significantly reduce the generation of dust.
- When using a hand-carving tool, keep your hands behind the tool and cut away from your body. When lifting heavy items, such stones or bags of plaster or cement, use appropriate lifting technique, get help from another person, or use mechanical aids.
- Because your hands become contaminated while working, do not eat, drink, or smoke in the studio. Wash your hands thoroughly when you finish working or leave the studio.
- Good personal hygiene is one of the most important ways you can reduce your exposure.

Handling Hazardous Waste

Materials that are to be disposed of as hazardous waste must be placed in sealable containers. Containers should be filled, leaving a headspace for expansion of the contents. Often the original container is perfectly acceptable. Similar wastes may be mixed if they are compatible (e.g solvents, linseed oil and oil-based paint).

Containers must be kept closed except during actual transfers. Do not leave a hazardous waste container with a funnel in it. Waste containers must be labeled as hazardous waste as soon as the material is first put into the container.

General Recommendations

- Don't purchase more of a material than you expect to use in the foreseeable future. The costs of disposal often exceed the purchase cost by a considerable margin.
- Substitute with a less hazardous material whenever possible..
- Keep all chemical containers clearly and unambiguously labeled.
- Dispose of your wastes at the completion of a project - don't abandon them for someone else to deal with later.

Chemical Hazards and Handling

Now we will look at some of the most common workplace hazards. The main categories of hazards to be mindful of are: biological, chemical, physical, human behaviour, and fire and explosion. Solvent use presents one of the most common hazards within the art studios. They are used in all media areas as thinners, cleaners and mediums and they present risks of inhalation, absorption and fire. In most instances, safer, low-risk solvents can be substituted for ones that are more hazardous and small quantities are adequate to do the job.

Chemical agents are considered hazardous not only because of what they contain but also because of the way in which they are used in the studio. Some hazardous chemical agents include:

- * Substances brought into the workplace and handled, stored and used in your work processes. These may include solvents, cleaning agents, paints, glues, and resin.
- * Substances generated by your work activity – fumes from welding, soldering, dust, solvent vapours from painting etc
- * Substances or mixtures produced by your work process – residues and waste for example.

General Recommendations on Chemical Handling & Hazards

- Read the label. Be sure you understand what you are working with and the associated hazards.
- When transferring thinners and other chemicals from the original stock container to a new container:
- Do not use drink containers.
- Cover or place a lid on the container when not in use to avoid evaporation and unneeded vapors.
- Label the new container with the contents and associated hazards.
- If possible, use tube or pre-mixed paints and commercially available inks to avoid mixing your own. If you mix your own pigments, do it in a ventilation hood. Use water-based products instead of solvent-based ones where possible. Keep all chemical containers closed when they are not in use.
- Never use your lips to point the end of your paintbrush or hold your brush handle with your teeth. Because your hands become contaminated while working, do not eat, drink, or smoke in the studio.
- Wash your hands thoroughly when you finish working or leave the studio.
- Never wash your hands in a solvent. If your hands have cuts or are chaffed, wear gloves. Chemicals can pass through these breaks in the skin and enter directly into your blood stream.
- Washing your hands frequently may dry them out, increasing the risk for cracks and breaks to develop in the skin. Apply skin moisturizers regularly to prevent your skin from drying out.
- Good personal hygiene is one of the most important ways you can reduce your exposure.
- Use the ventilation measures described in this guide to control solvent exposures.
- Wear a full-length smock or coveralls in the studio and do not wear them outside the studio. Wash them frequently and separately from other clothing.
- If toxic materials are being used, wear a full-length disposable smock or coveralls that are removed and properly disposed of in the studio.
- Wear chemical protective gloves, apron, and eye protection (goggles) as necessary when handling solvents and corrosive chemicals, or when cleaning brushes, screens, and other equipment.
- Chemicals and airborne particles can settle on food or beverage containers that are within the studio environment. Vapours can absorb into porous food items such as bread and be ingested into the body. Never eat, drink or smoke without first washing your hands.
- Always wear the proper Personal Protective Equipment for the chemicals you are using.
- Substitute safer products and processes whenever possible.
- Heating or combining some substances can increase their potential hazards.
- Sanding, grinding and polishing some materials can release toxins.
- Read and familiarize yourself with the posted Safe Operating Procedures for the chemicals you will be using.

Chemical Toxic Effects:

Hazardous substance and chemical toxicity is dependent on the length of time in which the exposure occurs and the amount of the chemical that enters the body. Acute effects are illnesses caused by a large dose of a toxic substance in a short period of time. Symptoms arise shortly after the exposure and can include acid burns, eye irritation, skin rash, nausea, dizziness, vomiting, loss of coordination, unconsciousness and even death. Chronic effects are illnesses caused by repeated small dosage exposure over a prolonged period of time. It can be years before symptoms appear and by then permanent damage has occurred. Examples are chronic lead poisoning, nerve damage, silicosis, and cancer.

Airbrushing and Spray Painting

Artists use many products in spray form, including fixatives, retouching sprays, paint sprays, varnishes, and adhesive sprays. To apply these products, airbrushes and aerosol spray cans may be used. Spray mists are particularly hazardous because they are easily inhaled. Aerosol spray paints have an additional hazard besides pigments and solvents.

Safety in Using Hand Tools

Hand tools may look harmless, but they can cause serious injuries. Always follow instructions on how to use hand tools and never use a tool that has been damaged. Statistics show that in the workplace there are almost three times as many injuries caused by hand tools as there are by power tools.

- Wearing Impact resistant safety glasses is mandatory whenever using hand tools.
- Always use tools that are in good condition.
- Never carry tools in your pockets. If they are sharp they can cut you.
- Always clamp work to a workbench or use a vise to hold work securely.
- Always use the right tool for the job. It can be hazardous to use a tool for something it was not designed to do.
- Do not wear bulky gloves while using hand tools as they inhibit your ability to grip the tool properly.
- Make sure you have enough room around you to use the tool safely so you do not injure yourself or others.

Safety in Using Power Tools

If you do not know how to use a power tool - then don't use it. Ask an experienced user to instruct and teach you the correct procedures in using the power tool.

General Precautions:

- Wearing Impact resistant safety glasses is mandatory whenever using power tools.
- Use the operator's manual to find out how to adjust and use a power tool properly.
- Tie long hair back and remove loose clothing or jewelry before using machines.
- Never deviate from safe operating procedures.
- All machines and tools can inflict serious injuries if misused.
- Never use a power tool that is damaged.
- Never operate machinery if you feel ill, fatigued or are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. You must be able to concentrate on the task at hand.
- Don't chat or talk to other people while using a power tool. Its operation needs your full concentration.
- Always make sure the tool is off before plugging it in.
- Never carry a tool by the power cord.
- Always disconnect a power tool from the supply of electricity before changing cutters or blades.
- Check that all adjusting keys are removed before switching on power tools.
- Check your machine setting and run through the procedure in your mind before switching tools on.
- All wood must be free of nails, screws or foreign objects before being used with machinery.
- Carefully check all wood yourself before using it.
- Areas around all you when using power tools must be kept clean and clear of debris.
- Many tools cause vibration, which can be harmful. Effects of vibration are tingling or numbness in the hands and arms, usually these symptoms will subside on their own. However to avoid this take regular breaks, at least 5 minutes every half hour, when using tools that create vibrations.
- Keep handles and grips dry and grease free to avoid slippage.
- Never attempt to free a stalled blade or material while power tool is on and plugged in.
- Do not wear bulky gloves while using power tools as they inhibit your ability to grip the tool properly.
- Make sure you have enough room around you to use the tool safely so you do not injure yourself or others.
- Unplug and return all tools after use safely.

Thank you for agreeing to our guidelines. Please do visit our suggested further guidelines links above.

Any questions email info@mart.ie