

MINIMUM STANDARDS FOR CURATION FACILITIES
(Simplified from DM 411)
36 CFR 79.9

I. General

All curation facilities that house federally owned museum collections must meet the standards identified in **36 CFR 79.9**, and specifically set forth by the *Department of Interior - Museum Property Handbook, DM 411*.

1. The repository should be **accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM)** or...:
2. A non-accredited repository may house federally owned museum collections if it meets the minimum standards set by 36 CFR 79.9 (specifically outlined in DM 411), including an **approved Curatorial/Collections Management Plan** that includes procedures for accessioning, cataloging, and deaccessioning museum property, and for handling incoming and outgoing loans.
3. The repository must have a **designated alternate repository** (that also meets the minimum standards for curation facilities) in case the facility closes.
4. The repository must have a **designated curator of record** and staff trained in the curation and basic conservation of the collections contained in the holdings.
5. The repository must have a written **scope of collections statement (SOCS)** that details the nature of present and future collections at the repository. This document serves to guide acquisitions decisions and to protect the repository from being asked to house superfluous or inappropriate collections. The SOCS may be an appendix to the Curatorial/Collections Management Plan.
6. The repository must have a **written access plan** that provides access to collections for scientific research, educational, administrative, or exhibition purposes.
7. **Sensitive information must be kept confidential.** This includes site-specific locality information, nature of certain ethnographic collections, and objects addressed by NAGPRA (specific procedures may be outlined in a curation agreement).
8. Museum should implement an **ethics policy** or follow the *Curator's Code of Ethics* at all times and may additionally have a specific code of ethics regarding the behavior of curatorial staff that addresses the acquisition of personal collections, outside employment, and engagement in commercial collecting activities.

II. Environmental Standards

9. Specimens must be stored with **appropriate environmental controls**, including temperature and humidity, in order to prevent deterioration and minimize the need for conservation treatment.

10. The repository must have a **pest management plan** and keep the facility free of insects, vermin, mold, and mildew. Food and drink must not be consumed or stored in the same rooms that collections are stored.

III. Security Standards

11. All collections areas need to be protected by both **locks and alarm systems**. A system must be in place that tracks all keys and security codes and identifies who is authorized to be in collections storage areas.

12. The repository must have a **fire prevention/suppression plan** and equipment in place.

13. A **visitor log** or sign-in/sign-out sheet should be maintained in order to track the use of collections by non-museum staff.

IV. Storage Standards

14. When possible, collections facilities should be situated **outside 100-year hazard zones**, including flood zones, earthquake faults, railroad tracks, and other potential geologic and environmental hazards.

15. Collections **storage areas should be separate from offices**, employee gathering areas, preparation and conservation laboratories, and have as few doors and windows as possible.

16. Collections should be stored **away from utility service panels and water/sewer pipes**. These should be located outside of collections storage areas and procedures should be in place to minimize the necessity to access conduits and utility corridors from collections storage areas.

17. Steps should be taken to **minimize ultraviolet light** in collections areas. Windows should be shuttered or covered with UV filters. Lighting should be designed to minimize UV radiation.

18. Collections should be stored in stable and **secure cabinetry** with smooth moving drawers and adequate clearance above each specimen. Oversized specimens may be stored on open shelving, but dust and UV covering should be considered in order to supplement protection.

19. Each object must be stored properly. Archives should be in archival (acid-free) boxes and folders. Objects and artifacts should be in ethafoam-lined boxes, non-gassing

polyethylene reclosable bags, glass vials, or other “state of the art” containers. Each object or artifact should be cradled, supported, or positioned, so that damage will not occur by its own weight over time or by the movement of sliding drawers open and closed.

20. The repository should have a **custodial plan** that addresses daily waste collection, periodic cleaning, and sanitation procedures.

21. Flammable liquids must be safely stored and kept away from all archival materials.

V. Quality Control

22. Accession files must be maintained that contain the following information:

- A. Transmittal documentation.** This is a document that certifies that the specific collection, object, or archive was acquired and transferred by legitimate means. This may include: copy of federal collecting permit, deed of gift, federal transfer of property (DI-105), will-and-testament, sales receipt, etc.
- B. Receiving report.** Generated by the repository, this documentation ensures that the specific collection falls within the repository’s scope of collections statement (SOCS) and is approved by a *designated receiving official* (usually a curator or museum director).
- C. Pertinent contextual information.** This includes field notes, maps, photographs, conservation or preparation records, related archives.
- D. Administrative documentation** that relates to the past, present, and future status of the collection. This may include internal documentation and notes as well.

23. Conservation and preparation documentation must be maintained that records techniques, chemicals, and treatments that have been applied to the objects, artifacts, or archives over time.

24. The repository must have a system in place to **monitor the status and location of objects** while they are checked out of collections storage. This may include outgoing loans or removal for study, conservation/preparation, or exhibit.

25. All objects and archives must display a **unique catalog identification** that includes the repository acronym, unique catalog number, and identifies federal ownership. Cataloging by item, composite, or lot may be at the discretion of the responsible curator, but *accession numbers and overall item counts must be shared with the appropriate federal agency* (numbers of items that are not yet cataloged may be reported as estimates).

26. Each repository should have a system in place to conduct a **periodic inventory** of its holdings. While complete inventories are ideal, random sample inventories are usually sufficient. Results from these inventories should be reported to the appropriate federal agency.