

Fireproof Cabinets & Safes

- 1** UL 350 protects paper — not digital media
A UL 350 1-hour cabinet keeps the interior below 350°F, but a flash drive, backup tape, or hard drive begins losing data at 125–150°F. Organizations storing digital media in a "fireproof cabinet" with only a UL 350 rating are getting no digital media protection. Specify UL Class 125 for digital media.
- 2** Always confirm the UL listing number — not just the product claim
Some products are marketed as "fireproof" without a legitimate UL listing. A genuine UL-listed product carries a UL listing number printed on the product and verifiable in UL's database. Never specify based solely on marketing language.
- 3** Plan the delivery path before ordering — not after
A 4-drawer fireproof lateral file can weigh 500–600 lbs. Discovering on delivery day that the elevator is too small or the doorway too narrow creates expensive delays. Always confirm elevator dimensions, doorway widths, and stair access for any fireproof product.
- 4** Fire + water resistance is not the same as fire resistance alone
Most fireproof cabinets are not specifically rated for water resistance. Sprinkler and fire hose water can flood a cabinet's interior through door gaps. For irreplaceable originals, specify a cabinet or safe with both fire and water-ingress UL listings.
- 5** Position fireproof cabinets on the lowest floor possible
In a multi-story fire, upper floors collapse onto lower floors. A fireproof cabinet on the ground floor survives collapse scenarios far better. For large installations, always recommend the ground floor as the installation location.
- 6** Electronic lock batteries must be replaced annually
An electronic safe with dead batteries cannot be opened without an emergency override. In a business emergency needing quick access to cash or documents, a dead battery is a critical failure. Establish an annual battery replacement schedule for every electronically locked unit.
- 7** For high-frequency access, electronic keypads outperform dial combinations
Mechanical dial locks are more secure against electronic bypass but take 30–45 seconds vs. 5–10 seconds for a keypad. For safes accessed daily (petty cash, daily filing), keypads dramatically improve workflow. Reserve dial locks for high-security applications.
- 8** The weight of a fireproof cabinet prevents removal in a burglary
A 500-lb fireproof file cabinet cannot be carried away by burglars. Even without a high-security burglary rating, the sheer weight provides meaningful resistance. A lighter safe with a high burglary rating that can be unbolted and carried may be less secure in practice.
- 9** Always anchor freestanding safes to the floor or wall
Any safe not anchored can be tipped, moved, or removed given enough time. Most commercial safes include pre-drilled anchor bolt holes. Floor anchoring is the minimum security standard — without it, burglary ratings are theoretical.
- 10** Fire-rated storage is a recoverable asset that protects irreplaceable ones
Frame the recommendation in terms of what the organization cannot replace: original signed contracts, deeds, court documents, patient records, audit files. The cost of a fireproof cabinet is trivial compared to the legal and financial cost of losing these documents permanently.