

10 reasons to go mobile for supplies and medical records

by Ronald J. Amero

Storage space is at a huge premium in most hospitals. Not only is it required for a wide variety of activities, records and supplies, but poorly designed or inaccessible storage can cause big problems: The inability to quickly find the right instrument or medication isn't just inconvenient—it could cost someone's life.

That's why some hospitals are switching to high-density mobile storage systems. Available in four types—manual, mechanical, electric and programmable electric—mobile systems offer many advantages.

1 Mobile storage can more than double the capacity of existing space—today.

Most hospitals simply don't have enough space and can't afford to construct new facilities. Mobile systems meet their immediate needs.

2 The systems provide a cost-effective solution to accommodate growth.

Mobile storage offers long-term benefits. This is especially true with programmable electric systems, which offer the highest storage density (sometimes 50 percent more than manual mobile systems) and allow a hospital to plan for expansion in existing spaces.

3 The costly waiting times and service fees associated with offsite storage and retrieval are eliminated.

Hospitals often turn to offsite storage—a practice that's both expensive and time-consuming. Onsite mobile storage saves money, increases productivity and enhances patient service.

4 Mobile storage improves efficiency and productivity to save time and lives.

It's a typical OR or ER dilemma—a criti-

cal instrument needs to be replaced and it's stored in a supply cabinet in a non-sterile environment. The greater capacity of mobile storage allows all necessary instruments and supplies to be kept close at hand. Point-of-use storage also improves efficiency and productivity in records, pharmacy and supplies. Special features to look for are aisle-end storage for frequently needed records or medications; systems that can be programmed to



permit multiple aisles to be opened at once; and short carriages that cut retrieval time.

5 The systems can be configured to store anything—from small, delicate items to bulky, uniquely shaped equipment.

Customization is a key benefit of mobile storage. Consider the needs of a typical pharmacy department: bulk supplies, sterile IV supplies and pharmaceuticals. Deep shelves and heavy-duty carriages can handle large boxes and heavy loads; enclosed shelving protects sterile items; and shallow, closely spaced shelves accommodate small bottles. Plus, the soft stop/start feature of programmable systems keeps fragile items from jarring. In bulk storage areas, electronic systems can even be programmed to open and close to allow proper airflow.

6 Items stay clean and dust-free.

Sterility is vital but difficult to maintain. Mobile systems can be securely closed and sealed to protect stored items.

7 Mobile storage provides security.

Although locking devices should be available on any good mobile product, programmable systems provide the ultimate in system security—electronic or remote access. This guarantees that aisles can be opened only by someone who has the proper authority.

8 Items are more readily accessible.

Mobile systems can improve accessibility in countless ways. This goes back to the idea of customization. Increased density allows medical records to be kept in a treatment area; a constantly rotating linen supply to be housed on narrower, more accessible shelves; pharmaceuticals to be stored at eye height and below. Electric systems also help hospitals to meet ADA requirements for accessibility.

9 Mobile storage provides a safe employee environment.

Improved density eliminates dangerous practices such as in-aisle or precarious overhead storage. Use of narrower shelves makes items easier to reach. Programmable systems safely move heavy loads with the touch of a button. Features to look for: passive safety systems, anti-tip protection and lighting.

10 Inventory control is fast and easy.

With storage in just one, easily accessible location, supplies are easy to monitor.

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