

# Protecting Staff Health in Legal Archives and File Rooms

Despite the push for digitization, New York City law firms still maintain vast physical archives. "Redwelds," case files, and court transcripts occupy rows of high-density shelving. These archive rooms are often low-traffic areas, which means they are frequently overlooked by standard cleaning rotations. However, paper is organic material; as it ages, it sheds microscopic fibers. Combined with dust, this creates a potent allergen cocktail. When paralegals or junior associates spend hours in these rooms conducting discovery, poor air quality can trigger asthma, allergies, and respiratory distress. Effective [law office cleaning in NYC](#) must extend into the depths of the file room.

## The "Old Paper" Dust Hazard

Paper dust is not just nuisance dust; it is an irritant. In a room filled with thousands of files, the concentration of this dust can be significant. When files are pulled and opened, clouds of particulate matter are released. If the room is not vacuumed with HEPA-filter equipment regularly, this dust settles on every surface and recirculates through the HVAC system. Professional cleaning for archives involves using backpack vacuums with high-filtration capabilities to capture these fine particles from the tops of shelving units and the aisles. It is about removing the mass of allergens to make the air breathable for staff.

## Preventing Silverfish and Paper Pests

Dust and aging paper are a food source for pests like silverfish and booklice. These insects thrive in undisturbed, dusty environments and can cause irreparable damage to legal documents. They feed on the starch in the paper and the glue in bindings. A rigorous cleaning schedule is the first line of defense against these pests. By removing the dust (their shelter) and keeping the floors free of organic debris, you make the environment inhospitable to them. Cleaning crews should also be trained to spot the early signs of pest activity—such as yellow staining or small holes in paper—so that the firm can bring in pest control before files are destroyed.

## Lighting and Ladder Safety During Cleaning

Archive rooms often have tall shelving that requires step ladders to access. Cleaning the upper reaches of these shelves is a safety challenge. Dust accumulates heavily on the top canopy of the shelving units, which can fall down onto staff below. Professional cleaners use extension wands and safety ladders to perform high dusting without risking injury. They also ensure that the lighting fixtures in these often dim rooms are clean, maximizing visibility. A well-lit, clean archive room is a safer place for staff to work, reducing the risk of trips or falls while carrying heavy boxes.

## **Mold Prevention in Climate-Controlled Zones**

Many archives are climate-controlled, but if the HVAC system is dirty or if there are pockets of stagnant air, mold can develop on paper. This is a catastrophic event for a law firm. Cleaning crews play a surveillance role here. While dusting and vacuuming, they can identify musty odors or visible mold growth on box surfaces. Regular cleaning promotes air movement and removes the spores that might settle on the files. By keeping the physical surfaces of the archive room sterile and dry, the cleaning team helps protect the integrity of the firm's most valuable historical data.

## **Conclusion**

The archive room is the memory of the law firm. Neglecting its cleanliness puts both the documents and the staff at risk. By implementing a specialized cleaning protocol for these high-density storage areas, you ensure that your team can access the past without compromising their health in the present.

**Call to Action** Preserve your documents and protect your staff with expert archive cleaning.

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