This policy is promulgated in accordance with Section 104.1 of the 2015 International Fire Code (IFC) and is an official interpretation of Section 8.15.3.2.3 of the 2013 edition of NFPA 13 and Sections 315.3.2 & 1023.1 of the 2015 edition of the IFC.

The following shall apply to any means of egress OR stairwells defined as an exit enclosure:

Section 8.15.3.2.3 of the 2013 edition of NFPA 13 reads as follows: “Sprinklers shall be installed beneath landings or stairways where the area beneath is used for storage.” This section could possibly imply that storage is allowed underneath landings and stairways, however Section 315.3.2 of the 2015 IFC reads as follows: “Combustible materials shall not be stored in exits or exit enclosures.” Furthermore, Section 1023.1 of the 2015 IFC reads as follows: “An exit enclosure shall not be used for any purpose other than a means of egress.” Therefore, it is the opinion of the Fire Marshal that at no time shall any exit stairway enclosure be used for the storage of any material, regardless of whether or not the material is combustible. The following is the Des Moines Fire Prevention Bureau’s policy on storage within exit stair enclosures and other portions of the means of egress:

1.) Storage of any materials beneath stairways or stair landings within an exit enclosure shall be PROHIBITED at all times.
2.) Storage of any materials within the means of egress shall be PROHIBITED at all times.
3.) Storage of materials beneath stairways or stair landings shall only be allowed when appropriate sprinkler protection is present and the stairway is not a portion of the means of egress or an exit enclosure.

Any comments or questions regarding the above information may be submitted to:

Office of the Fire Protection Engineer
City of Des Moines Fire Department
Fire Prevention Bureau
2715 Dean Avenue
Des Moines, Iowa 50317
Office: (515) 237-1316
Fax: (515) 283-4907
Email: firedept@dmgov.org