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Guidelines for UPS & Battery Storage

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Supersedes	Version 2.1 of the Battery guideline
Changes from previous version	Added requirement for Li-ion batteries
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1 Battery Overview

There are primarily three kinds of batteries used in UPSs—**vented lead acid (VLA)** (also called flooded-cell), **valve-regulated lead-acid (VRLA)**, and sealed or maintenance-free **lithium-ion** batteries. VRLA batteries usually have lower up-front costs but have a shorter lifetime of around five years. Flooded-cell batteries require more maintenance but have a longer lifetime, up to 20 years. **Lithium-ion batteries** are smaller and lighter than the above types and have changed the traditional status quo for UPS use. Costs are like VRLA, and new energy storage applications with UPS systems, such as gridsharing and peak shaving, are now viable. These new capabilities provide more than just backup time and can now contribute to significant cost savings for the user in their day-to-day operations.

2 Lead-Acid Batteries

Lead-acid batteries are the most widely used electrical energy storage, primarily for uninterrupted power supply (UPS) equipment and emergency power system (inverters). Lead-acid batteries release hydrogen gas that is potentially explosive. The battery rooms must be adequately ventilated to prohibit the build-up of hydrogen gas. The hydrogen generation is relatively small during normal operation. However, significant hydrogen can be produced during rapid and deep discharge of the battery.

2.1 Types Of Lead-Acid Batteries

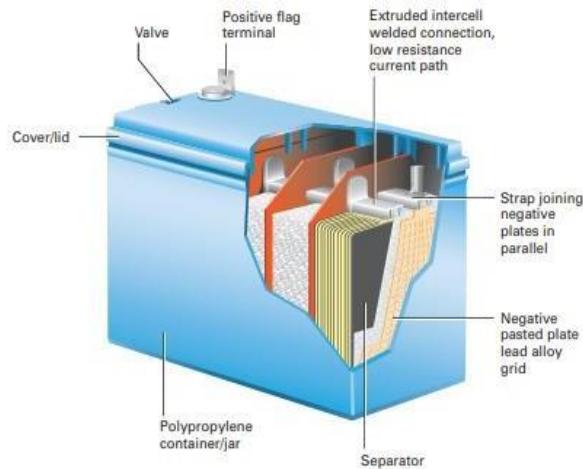
2.1.1 Vented Lead-acid (VLA) Batteries

Vented Lead-acid Batteries are commonly called “flooded” or “wet cell” batteries. VLA is an exceptionally reliable design, so failures are uncommon until halfway of their 20-year pro-rated life. The most common failure mode is a short circuit and even that is not an emergency, as long as the fault is localized. However, there are downsides to flooded-cell batteries. VLA

batteries require more maintenance, safety and space. VLA batteries have thick lead-based plates that are submersed in an acid electrolyte. The electrolyte depletes over time so distilled water must be added periodically. Also, hydrogen is produced during charging. The hydrogen is



Flooded-cell batteries require more advanced maintenance but have a longer battery service life



Internal and external components of a valve-regulated lead-acid (VRLA) battery

evacuated through vents. Hydrogen is highly flammable and explosive, so these batteries must be installed in a ventilated room. OLSEH mandates 6 air-changes per hour in the battery room.

2.1.2 Recombinant Valve-Regulated Lead-acid (VRLA) Batteries

VRLA batteries are sealed, usually within polypropylene plastic, so there is no sloshing acid that can leak or drip when inverted or handled roughly. The term “valve-regulated” refers to the method of gas release. If the gas pressure becomes too great inside the battery, the valve will vent when it reaches a certain pressure.

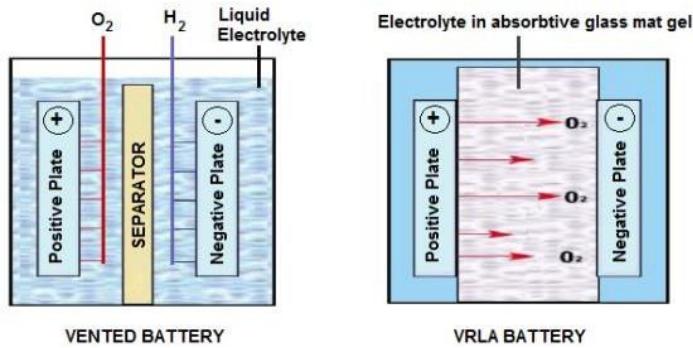
Recombinant cells have a starved or gelled electrolyte. The oxygen generated from the positive electrode during charging diffuses to the negative electrode producing water:



The recombination reaction suppresses hydrogen evolution at the negative electrode, thereby allowing the cell to be sealed. In practice, the recombination efficiency is not 100% and a pressure relief valve regulates the internal pressure at a relatively low value, generally below 10 psig.

2.2 Comparison between flooded and sealed batteries

The diagram below shows a comparison between vented battery gassing and VRLA battery recombination.



Both the vented and the VRLA batteries work on the principle of chemical reactions between positive and negative plates. But there are some key differentiating characteristics:

- In flooded cell batteries the electrolyte is in liquid form, while in VRLA batteries it is immobilized in a gel or absorbent glass mats.
- The flooded cell batteries release hydrogen continuously during charging while the VRLA batteries release hydrogen only when overheated and/or overcharged. The flooded cell batteries emit approximately 60 times more hydrogen than comparably rated VRLA batteries.
- The flooded cell batteries require dedicated ventilation system to maintain hydrogen concentration below the lower explosive limit. VRLA batteries have lesser risk, and these can be housed without mechanical ventilation. Supplier guidance must be applied.
- The flooded cell batteries should be installed in dedicated rooms physically separated from other areas. Room construction shall be designed to meet the required fire resistance rating for the application. VRLA batteries have less risk and can be used in the same room as the equipment they support.
- VRLA batteries are prone to failure condition known as "thermal runaway." It is a condition when the heat generation rate inside the battery is faster than the heat dissipation. To prevent the failure and the battery dry out, the safety valves open and the battery vents hydrogen until temperature and/or voltage are reduced. This condition can be triggered by charger over-voltage. Flooded cell batteries are immune to thermal runaway condition.
- Flooded lead-acid batteries can be charged at high voltage settings which improve performance. VRLA batteries are usually set to a lower voltage limit, which shelters the battery but produces poor performance. Check with your battery vendor for guidance.
- VRLA batteries usually have lower up-front costs but have a shorter lifetime than wet cell, usually around five years. Flooded cell batteries require more advanced maintenance but have a longer lifetime, up to 20 years

3 Lithium-Ion Batteries

Lithium batteries have significant benefits over lead-acid batteries for UPS, for example, small size, light weight, high cycle-count (charge-discharge cycles), faster recharge times, and built-in battery management (not just monitoring). The technology is under active development due to the demand from heavy-duty sectors like e-mobility.

Li batteries have a battery management system in each battery, as well as in a system-level master controller. It manages charge current, voltage, and cell voltage balance, while adjusting as necessary to eliminate any chance of overtemperature. If temperatures rise above safe levels, the management system will independently disconnect the battery or string via multiple different disconnection means, and notify the user via the battery cabinet monitor, and an alarm on the UPS.

4 Battery Hazards

4.1 Thermal Runaway

Batteries are designed to operate in a relatively narrow temperature range. Thermal runaway occurs when the heat generated in a battery exceeds its ability to dissipate it. Thermal runways can occur without warning, with the battery cell temperature rising incredibly fast (milliseconds). The energy stored in that battery is released suddenly. The chain reaction creates extremely high temperatures (around 752 degrees Fahrenheit / 400 degrees Celsius), causing a fire that is nearly impossible to extinguish. Thermal runaway in lithium-ion batteries has received a lot of attention due to fires in cell phone and hoverboard batteries. However, thermal runaway can happen in all battery types. In extreme cases, thermal runaway can cause batteries to explode and start fires. In minor cases, it can cause batteries to melt or be damaged beyond repair.

Several conditions can cause thermal runaway in a battery. Thermal runaway can occur due to an **internal short circuit** caused by physical damage to the battery or poor battery maintenance. The same type of scenario could cause an external short circuit which could also kick off the chain reaction. **Overcharging** a battery beyond its safe max voltage (to extend the distance an electric car will run, for example) can permanently damage the battery and lead to thermal runaway. **Rapid charging** can also lead to thermal runaway because rapid charging can lead to excessive currents. Finally, **temperatures outside** of the safe region on either the low or high side degrades a battery's performance. This leads to irreversible damage to the battery and possible triggering of the reaction. While the danger of excessive heat may be obvious, the danger of excessive cold may be confusing. The functioning of lithium-ion batteries depends on chemical reactions. Excessive cold can slow or stop those chemical reactions from occurring.



4.2 Overcharging and Undercharging

Modern batteries have an efficiency of > 90%. To fully charge a battery, one only requires 107% to 115% of the rated energy. For example, 10.7 ampere-hours is sufficient to fully charge a 10-ampere-hour battery. Pushing more than 107% energy or charging at too high a rate constitutes overcharging. Overcharging is a common cause of premature battery failure.

Undercharging of the battery occurs when a battery is not fully recharged during the recharge cycle. The residual lead sulphate (PbSO_4) remains on the positive and negative plates and eventually 'hardens'. With successive cycles of undercharging, the layer of residual lead sulphate becomes thicker, the electrolyte specific gravity decreases, and the battery cycles down in capacity. In the 'hardened' condition, it may not be possible to convert the residual lead sulphate back into the original lead dioxide, sponge lead and sulphur acid active materials, even with higher voltage charging efforts. In this case, the battery will suffer a permanent loss in capacity.

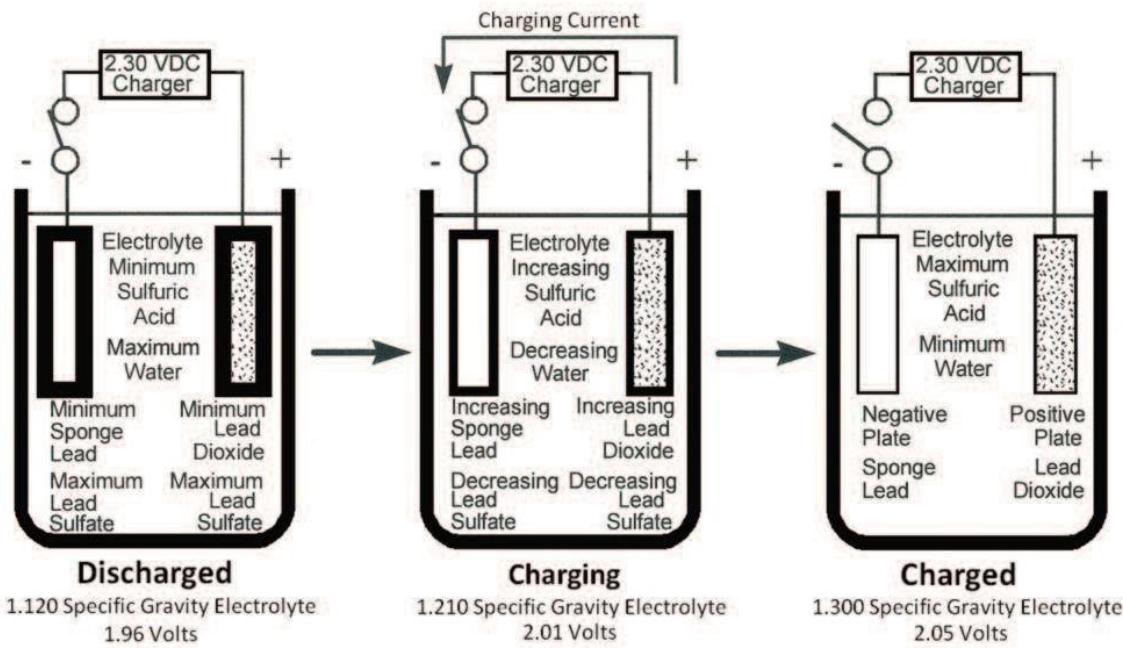


Figure 2 - Lead Acid Battery Recharge

4.3 Electrical hazards

- Electric shock may occur when one makes direct contact with the exposed battery terminals stayed at different potentials or with the exposed conductor of cables or conductive parts connected with the battery, resulting in the passing of electric current through the body of the victim.
- Short-circuit of the battery terminals or other electrical conductors stayed at different potential would cause a high current flow. The sudden release of energy stored in the battery in a short time and under an uncontrolled manner may cause a flashover and explosion, thus resulting in the rupture of battery housing, spillage of electrolyte, melting down of battery terminals or other metal parts, and subsequent splashing of molten metal, etc.

4.4 Fire and explosion hazards

- a. When the charging operation is close to completion, explosive gas may be generated from the battery due to the action of electrolysis of water contained in the electrolyte solution.
- b. The gases produced are hydrogen and oxygen. The former is much lighter than the air and would accumulate in the air space above the electrolyte solution inside the battery. These gases may also leak through the battery vents and disperse to the surrounding of the battery room or workplace.
- c. Hydrogen gas when mixed with oxygen or air can be explosive. Any spark or naked flame present may cause a fierce explosion of the explosive mixture. Sparks may be generated by electrostatic discharge, abrasion of some metals, normal switching, or abnormal tripping of electrical equipment, etc. A smoldering burn may turn into a blaze in the presence of enriched oxygen. Any combustibles in the vicinity, which are not ignited in the air normally, may ignite by itself in the presence of enriched oxygen.

4.5 Chemical hazards

- a. Electrolyte (Sulfuric acid) is combustible. Contact with organic materials may cause fire and explosion. It also reacts violently with strong reducing agents, metals, sulfur trioxide gas, strong oxidizers, and water. Contact with metals may produce toxic sulfur dioxide fumes and may release flammable hydrogen gas. Workers may suffer from skin burns or eye injuries caused by the spillage or splashing of electrolytes. It is important to take precautionary measures like PPE, ventilation, housekeeping, and personal hygiene.
- b. For lead compounds, avoid contact with strong acids, bases, halides, halogenates, potassium nitrate, permanganate, peroxides, nascent hydrogen and reducing agents.
- c. For lithium-ion batteries, consult the vendor's Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for list of hazards.

5 Battery Safety

5.1 Prevent thermal runaway

- a. **Proper Storage Temperature:** Always store batteries at safe temperatures. The ideal storage temperature for most lithium-ion batteries is between 40-70 degrees Fahrenheit (5-20 degrees Celsius). However, this can differ based on the battery and manufacturer, so consult the label for your specific battery.
- b. **Proper Ventilation:** One of the easiest ways to maintain a safe operating temperature is properly ventilation. All the electronics needed to manage your battery system, plus the batteries themselves, produce heat. The heat generated by the batteries and electronics must be dissipated.
- c. **Replace Old Batteries:** Old batteries must be replaced before end-of-life. If you have an old battery that has been uncharged or undercharged, it may have built up gases within the casing, which can easily cause an explosion. If you see a deformed or "bubbled" battery, do not attempt to charge it. Properly dispose of and replace any deformed batteries.

- d. **Don't Overcharge:** Overcharging a battery can cause an electrochemical reaction that may result in thermal runaway. Monitoring the charge status of your battery is essential for this reason.
- e. **Battery Management System(BMS):** Battery management systems (BMS) monitor and manage cell voltage, cell current, cell temperature, cell charge balancing, charge control, and internal short circuit detection. Essentially, the BMS is an electronic system that manages either a single cell or an entire battery pack. It monitors the state of the battery and reports the data. It also protects the battery (or cell) by controlling or balancing the environment of the battery (or cell).

5.2 Manage spills or leaks for lead acid batteries

Stop the flow of materials and contain/absorb small spills with dry sand, earth, or vermiculite. Don't use combustible materials. If possible, carefully neutralize spilled electrolyte with soda ash, sodium bicarbonate or lime. Wear acid-resistant clothing, boots and gloves, and a face shield. Do not allow discharge of un-neutralised acid to get to the sewer.

5.3 Read MSDS

The materials in batteries make them volatile and therefore potentially hazardous. Performing regular periodic maintenance on your batteries can go a long way in preventing unsafe situations before they occur. Always refer to the material safety data sheet for specific precautionary measures. Sample MSDS of the three types of batteries are available in the links below:

	Type of battery	MSDS
1	Lithium Ion Battery	1935761.pdf
2	VLA Battery	VLA Batteries.pdf
3	VRLA Battery	MSDS-VRLA-Non-Hazardous.pdf

5.4 Proper storage

The batteries need to be stored as per the following rules.

- a. Always store the battery in cool and covered areas. Do not keep the battery in direct sunlight, dust, or moist place.
- b. Keep the battery away from sparks, heat source or fire. Do not store batteries near other hazards like cylinders and chemicals. There must be a separation, like a physical barrier or 20 ft of space.
- c. Do not let dust accumulate on the battery. Clean the dust with a dry cloth, not wet.
- d. Provide proper isolation between battery and battery rack. Do not allow any metal object to rest on the battery - this may cause a short circuit.
- e. Do not add acid or distilled water in VLRA or lithium-ion battery
- f. Do not mix batteries with different capacities, different makes, different types (VRLA, Flooded/ Tubular batteries) and different manufacturers' batteries in the same circuit.
- g. Never install any type of battery in a completely sealed enclosure or room. Sufficient ventilation must be provided.

Table 1: Summary of storage requirement for batteries.

	Vented Lead-acid (VLA)	Valve Regulated Lead-acid (VRLA)	Lithium-Ion Batteries
			
Storage area	Separate storage area (cabin) required	Separate storage area not required	Separate storage area not required
Ventilation	Forced ventilation for the separate cabin is required	Room/lab should be adequately ventilated	Room/lab should be adequately ventilated
Ideal temperature	25 C	25 C	25 C
Flammable Gas cylinders/pipelines	20 Ft clearance distance required	20 Ft clearance distance required	20 Ft clearance distance required
Housekeeping	Dust accumulation should be prevented	Dust accumulation should be prevented	Dust accumulation should be prevented
PPE required for accessing the storage area	Electrical safety shoes & acid resistant gloves are required	Electrical safety shoes are required	Electrical safety shoes are required
Sign boards required	Entry restricted; Electrical hazard 	Electrical hazard  Danger Electrical hazard	Electrical hazard  Danger Electrical hazard

6 Some Common Issues Related to Storage of Batteries & UPS in IISc

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Storage of batteries in poor ventilated area ➤ Metal toolbox stored near to batteries. ➤ Batteries should not be kept beneath any table, closed cabinets, etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Storage of wet lead acid batteries in poor ventilated area ➤ Poor housekeeping near battery storage area. ➤ Wet lead acid batteries should be stored in separate cabin with forced ventilation 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Storage of VRLA batteries in poor ventilated area ➤ Poor housekeeping near battery storage area. ➤ Wet lead acid batteries should be stored in separate cabin with forced ventilation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Dust accumulation ➤ Poor housekeeping near battery storage area. ➤ Wash basin near the battery storage area 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Storage of VRLA batteries in poor ventilated area ➤ Storage of compressed gas cylinder near battery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Storage of other equipment ups and battery storage area ➤ Poor housekeeping near battery storage area. 	

7. Precautions:-

1. Valve-regulated lead-acid (VRLA) batteries contain an explosive mixture of hydrogen gas. Do not smoke, cause a flame or spark in the immediate area of the batteries. This includes static electricity from the body.
2. Wear rubber gloves and boots. While maintenance and installation.

The requirements for the installation of VRLA batteries and their location are considered.

SL no	Consideration	Recommendations
1.	Space	Aisle space should be in accordance with the National Electric Code (NEC) Article 110-16 or local codes. Clearance from wall/equipment - 4" (10 cm) minimum
2.	Environment	Clean, cool and dry. The location should be selected to keep water, oil, and dirt away from all cells.
3.	Temperature	Ambient temperature between 72°-78°F (23°-26°C) Elevated temperatures reduce operating life. Lower temperatures reduce battery performance. Minimize temperature variations between the cells. (To avoid temperature variation between the cells, do NOT locate the battery near HVAC ducts or exhausts, heat sources (i.e., equipment that generates heat) or direct sunlight.
4.	Ventilation	No special battery room or ventilation is required. However, do NOT install in an airtight enclosure.
5.	Grounding	It is recommended that the modules or racks be grounded in accordance with NEC and/or local codes.
6.	Floor	Reasonably level. Shimming up to 1/4" (6mm) maximum to level the battery front to rear and side to side. Capable of supporting the weight of the battery as well as any auxiliary equipment.
7.	Anchoring	All installations should be floor anchored. Anchoring should meet all local, state, federal codes and industry standards. The installer is responsible for the floor anchoring and its design. Ensure seismic requirements are considered.
8.	Proximity to	PowerSafe™ VRLA batteries may be

	Electronic Equipment	installed next to electronic equipment, unless it generates heat.
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The requirements for installation of Vented lead acid battery and their location are considered.

SL no	Consideration	Recommendations
1.	Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between Batteries: There should be a minimum distance of 2 inches (50 mm) between individual batteries to ensure adequate ventilation and prevent overheating. Between Battery Rows: Maintain at least 3 feet (0.9 meters) of clearance between rows of batteries to allow for proper airflow and easy access for maintenance
2.	Environment	Clean, cool and dry. The location should be selected to keep water, oil, and dirt away from all cells.
3.	Temperature	Ambient temperature between 72°-78°F (10°-25°C) Protect batteries from extreme heat or cold, which can affect their efficiency and lifespan.
4.	Ventilation	ventilation at a rate of not less than 1 cubic foot per minute per square foot (1 ft ³ /min/ft ²) [0.0051 m ³ /s · m ²] of floor area of the room
5.	Grounding	It is recommended that the modules or racks be grounded in accordance with NEC and/or local codes.
6.	Floor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Level Surface: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The surface should be reasonably level, with shimming allowed up to 1/4 inch (6 mm) to level the battery front to rear and side to side. Weight Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The surface must be capable of supporting the weight of the battery as well as any auxiliary equipment. Acid-Resistant Construction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The floor should be made of acid-resistant material or protected from acid accumulations to prevent damage and ensure safety
7.	Anchoring	All installations should be floor anchored. Anchoring should meet all local, state, federal codes and industry standards. The installer is responsible for the floor

		anchoring and its design. Ensure seismic requirements are considered.
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The requirements for installation of Lithium-Ion battery and their location are considered.

SL no	Consideration	Recommendations
1.	Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Between Individual Batteries: There should be a minimum distance of 1 inch (25 mm) between individual lithium-ion batteries to ensure adequate ventilation and prevent overheating. Between Battery Rows: Maintain at least 2 feet (0.6 meters) of clearance between rows of batteries to allow for proper airflow and easy access for maintenance.
2.	Environment	Clean, cool and dry. The location should be selected to keep water, oil, and dirt away from all cells.
3.	Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Optimal Temperature: The ideal operating temperature range for lithium-ion batteries is 15°C to 35°C (59°F to 95°F). For storage, a temperature range of -20°C to 25°C (-4°F to 77°F) is recommended. Avoid Extreme Temperatures: Protect batteries from extreme heat or cold, which can affect their efficiency and lifespan. Excessive temperatures can lead to safety risks such as thermal runaway.
4.	Ventilation	ventilation at a rate of not less than 60 cubic feet per minute per square foot (1 ft ³ /min/ft ²) [0.0051 m ³ /s · m ²] of floor area of the room
5.	Grounding	It is recommended that the modules or racks be grounded in accordance with NEC and/or local codes.
6.	Floor	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Level Surface: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The surface should be reasonably level, with shimming allowed up to 1/4 inch (6 mm) to level the battery front to rear and side to side. Weight Support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The surface must be capable of supporting the weight of the battery as well as any auxiliary equipment. Acid-Resistant Construction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The floor should be made of

		acid-resistant material or protected from acid accumulations to prevent damage and ensure safety.
7.	Anchoring	<p>All installations should be floor-anchored. Anchoring should meet all local, state, and federal codes and industry standards.</p> <p>The installer is responsible for the floor anchoring and its design.</p> <p>Ensure seismic requirements are considered.</p>

8. References

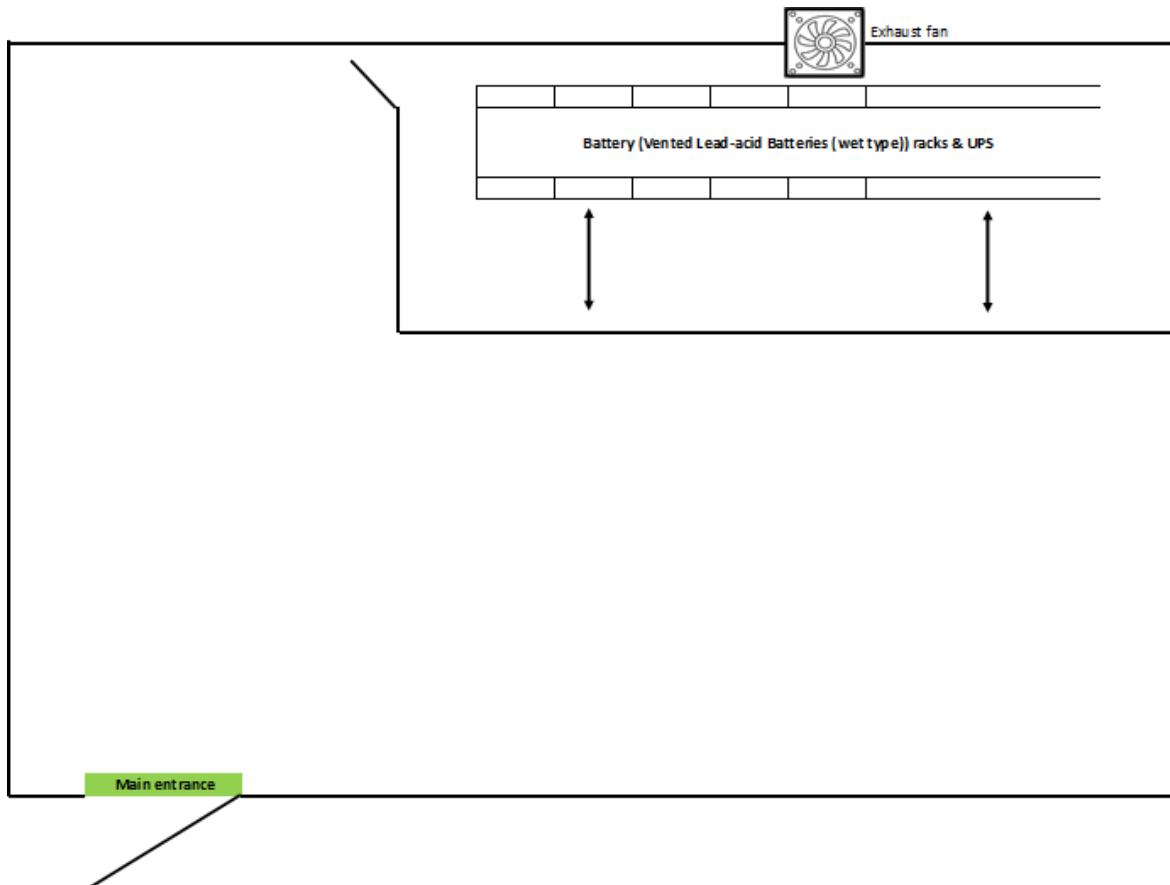
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- [3] Exide's Do's and Don'ts for Sealed Maintenance Free Batteries, 2022
- [4] The large UPS battery handbook, EATON
- [5] Technical Bulletin, 41-2128, Charging Valve Regulated Lead Acid Batteries, C&D Technologies
- [6] Publication No. US-VR-OM-002 March 2008

9. Appendix

a. Typical Layouts of a Battery & UPS Room

Below is sample layout of the battery room in a lab. The layout is exemplary. It does not include dimensions because details will be different for each lab.

i. For Vented Lead-acid Batteries



ii. For Recombinant Valve Regulated Lead-acid-VRLA (Dry type) or Lithium-ion batteries

