

NIH Supply Center Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated: April 20, 2023

Question: What should I do if I received a backorder notification?

Answer: Please call our Customer Service Teams at 1-833-3 ONE NIH (1-833-366-3644) to confirm order status and receive an estimated date of delivery.

If it is already an established product on our portfolio, normal delivery is 2- 3 days from date of order to delivery.

Real-time warehouse inventory updates are available through NBS; however, updates to the Building 10 Supply Store inventory, POTS, and nVision are not currently real-time. While we work with our system partner, NBS, to gain this functionality, the best option is to contact our Customer Service Specialists, who can offer accurate stock levels and comparable alternatives to meet more urgent delivery time frames.

Question: Can the NIHSC ensure that PPE items are in stock since it is our first option for ordering?

Answer: Yes, we are working to do just that! Knowing that OALM Alert 23-08 requires all Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to be sourced through the NIH Supply Center, we are putting into place 2+ year contracts with wholly domestic PPE vendors to meet Infrastructure Investment & Jobs Act (Public Law 117-58) requirements and HHS federal mandate.

This will greatly increase the speed and frequency of PPE vendor deliveries to the NIHSC, thus eliminating the risk of backorders for PPE. Buying in bulk, from reputable/vetted suppliers, promotes good for government outcomes, saving dollars for science. Please tell us what you need, how much you need, and when you need it – and we'll make sure we have it ready for you!

Question: Can the NIHSC ensure that “basic” supplies such as batteries are always on hand?

Answer: Yes. Please let us know your requirements (type of battery/batteries and quantity levels) so that we know what you need. When you let us know what you need, we can make sure that both the Building 10 Supply Store and the NIH Supply Center have a sufficient stock level to support your IC needs.

We are constantly monitoring our on-hand stock levels, average monthly demand by customer, and growing our product portfolio - to support your needs. We strive to stock products in sufficient quantities to immediately respond to customer orders. Our goal will always be zero backorders and ensuring that you have the mission critical supplies you need to do your work, uninterrupted.

Question: Can NIHSC provide better product descriptions in your catalog?

Answer: Yes. Our promise to you is a robust product catalog, with up-to-date information on product description(s), on-hand availability, latest pricing, and meaningful product substitutions. We continue to modernize and revamp our product catalog. Please be on the lookout for new and exciting changes to our product catalog and website! If you have a suggestion on how we can improve our product descriptions, please contact the NIHSC Customer Service at NIHSC-CustomerService@od.nih.gov.



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Want an item that you don't see on our catalog? Access our "New Product Request" webform here: [Customer New Item Request Form6152018.PDF \(nih.gov\)](#)

Question: What happened to the commodity updates?

Answer: Good news – we will be publishing online Commodity Updates featuring top selling items, IJJA Compliant Items, Green Products, and more! Our team is excited to bring back new and improved Commodity Updates. For the newest information, please continue to visit our [website](#) and [product catalog](#) to check for updates! We want to ensure that you are receiving communications that are meaningful and timely to you.

Our goal is to ensure that Commodity Updates are dynamic, accessible, and reflect the products that you, our customers, are interested in. Thank you for your interest in these communications, and please continue to give us this great feedback!

Question: Why are discontinued items still showing up in the catalog?

Answer: Great question. Items labeled as "Discontinued" are still visible on our online product catalog because there is still available inventory on-hand. Discontinued items occur when the supplier/manufacturer is no longer producing that item, or when our sales no longer support continuing to carry that item. Once available inventory of a discontinued product is sold/issued, those items no longer show up on the catalog.

The online catalog is updated daily to display active, and available stock – and we are constantly adding the products you need!

Question: Do I need a CAN Card to shop at the NIHSC?

Answer: No. The CAN (Common Account Number) card is a physical card that is only required when shopping in person at the campus Supply Store in Building 10.

When you shop the NIH Supply Center online with orders placed through NBS, POTS, AMBIS, or by phone, you do not need a CAN card! If you would like to shop at our Supply Store and need a CAN card, please contact your AO or IC CAN Card Coordinator (IC-CCC). Please visit the following link for more information about the NIH CAN Card (Supply Store charge card): <https://policymanual.nih.gov/26101-41-E>

Question: I need an item that you do not carry in the catalog. How can I purchase it from the NIHSC?

Answer: It's easy! If you don't see what you need, all you need to do is tell us. If you don't see an item you like, we can get it for you! Please fill out our [New Item Request Form](#) and submit to NIHSC-customerservice@od.nih.gov with the subject: "NEW ITEM REQUEST". Be on the lookout for the new version of our form, a digital "point-and-click" submission through our website!



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Our team will do the legwork and research to get you the item needed at the best price. The item will be added as a “nonstock item”, which means that the NIHSC orders it, when you place an order for it. If the NIH community shows an increasing demand for that item, it may become a fully stocked item.

Question: Are Information Technology (IT) and computer products already vetted by the Center for Information Technology (CIT) and/or by IC IT offices?

Answer: The NIHSC does not carry accountable property such as computers, monitors, and laptops. However, the NIHSC does carry computer accessories (i.e., wireless mice, keyboards, speakers etc.) in its portfolio. Don't forget to check the [NIH Excess Property Catalog](#), which provides a variety of scientific and IT equipment, available for reutilization

Question: Does the NIHSC warehouse carry the same products as the Building 10 Supply Store?

Answer: Our catalog items are available from both our warehouse and the Building 10 Supply Store. If you don't see it on the shelves at the Building 10 NIH Supply Store, please ask an associate for assistance or place an order online for delivery. Regardless of the location of the product, the NIHSC can get you what you need (with free delivery).

In a few cases, products are available either only at the store or the warehouse. For example, enzymes are only available at the Supply Store in Bldg. 10 due to strict temperature-controlled requirements. Similarly, dry ice and gas cylinders are only available by ordering from the warehouse due to contractual and temperature regulations. These items are dropped off directly to customers or building drop spots. Finally, if an item is “Discontinued”, a limited quantity of that item might be available at only the NIHSC warehouse or store.

Question: Does the NIHSC ship items that require cold storage (like enzymes) off campus?

Answer: Unfortunately, the NIHSC does not currently have the necessary resources to deliver temperature-controlled products from our Building 10 supply store to off-campus locations. We are currently exploring the possibility of acquiring a vehicle suitable for the delivery of temperature-controlled products.

Question: How much is the NIH Supply Center cost recovery fee? Why is the NIHSC charging this fee?

Answer: Great question. The NIHSC is a good for government, not for profit, agency priority source for laboratory, fire and safety, facilities, and administrative supplies, as well as being the mandated source for PPE, alcohol, and cylinders. NIH requires the NIH Supply Center to operate under a fee-for-service model, to recoup its operating costs and the rising price of cost of goods sold. The Cost Recovery fee is currently 20% but can be reduced dramatically with your help. The more volume of purchases that come through the NIH Supply Center, the more we can negotiate best pricing putting NIH first in priority with our suppliers. The only way to reduce or eliminate the cost recovery fee is through bulk buying ...as more ICs buy from the NIHSC, the greater the pricing discounts. The NIH Supply Center will review the cost recovery fee annually, based on the volume of purchases to determine whether we can adjust it downward.



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Please Note: For PPE purchases made under the anticipated enterprise NIH contract forthcoming NLT Q4 of FY23, the cost recovery fee is expected to be greatly reduced for these products for the forecasted volume.

Question: How else can I help reduce pricing?

Answer: By buying in bulk. If you can forecast your requirements on a monthly or quarterly basis, buying in bulk helps NIH Supply Center negotiate the best pricing secured through volume discounts. Over time this can also help us reduce the cost recovery fee.

Buying in bulk is only possible if we come together as OneNIH, sharing our needs and leveraging commonalities. Please tell us what you need, and together, we can realize volume discounts together, saving dollars for science.

Question: How often does the NIHSC update the online catalog with information from NBS?

Answer: The online catalog is updated daily to display current pricing and active, and available stock – and we are constantly adding the products you need. Don't see what you need? Tell us and we'll get it for you! Request the product to be added to our portfolio by filling out the [New Item Request Form](#) and submit to NIHSC-customerservice@od.nih.gov with the subject: "NEW ITEM REQUEST".

Question: How can you see the stock levels and item availability for the NIHSC portfolio?

Answer: While the NIHSC online catalog does not currently display the stock levels in real-time, we are modernizing our website to reflect on-hand quantity. In the meantime, please contact the NIHSC Customer Service at 1-833-366-3644, and they will provide you with the right information!

Question: Can scientific equipment be added to the NIH Supply Center product portfolio?

Answer: Yes. Please let us know what item you need, along with the specifications and usage information. Please fill out the [Customer New Item Request Form](#) and email it to Customer Service at NIHSC-CustomerService@od.nih.gov with the subject: "NEW ITEM REQUEST". We are excited to share that starting May 1st, you will be able to submit New Item Requests directly via an easy online web form, saving you time.

Question: What is the turnaround time on adding a new item to the NIHSC portfolio?

Answer: While the process of adding the new item to NBS can be done relatively quickly (1-3 business days), the ability to order that new item will depend on how quickly we find the supplier and how responsive they are to business negotiations, such as price and shipping. Time varies based on item availability and whether it is a new item in the commercial marketplace. Once the item is available through the Supply Center, you will receive an email with the appropriate NSN.

Question: I have some ideas on how to make ordering easier through POTS or NBS. Where can I share my ideas?

Answer: We'd love to hear your ideas! As the end user, it is critical that you have an easy and secure experience when placing orders. Please email the NIHSC Customer Service at



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NIHSC-CustomerService@od.nih.gov with any ideas and suggestions on how we can provide you with the best ordering experience.

As part of our modernization efforts, we are working closely with NBS to develop an “e-store front”, to provide you with an easy “point and click” solution to shopping the NIH Supply Center. We envision a sleek, modernized website, providing you what you need to make an informed purchasing decision. This development effort is being fully supported by OALM, NBS, and NIH leadership via a formal project charter, and as a collaborative group, we are excited to implement the “e-store front” in FY23-FY24!

Similarly, we are partnering with POTS on several ordering entry improvements to better serve our customers. The POTS Steering Committee, which represents the interests of the ICs, decides on the projects and priorities that POTS Support works on. We would also suggest reaching out to your IC POTS coordinator and ask if they can voice your concerns at the IC level. We would love to request these types of changes as a community (stronger together)!

We want our customers to be able to make informed decisions about what they are buying, and when they should expect to receive it. While the current systems do not provide this level of functionality, please rest assured that the NIHSC wants to hear your suggestions on how we can make this better for you.

Question: Having a timeframe of when an item might be available is critical. Is NIHSC able to provide this?

Answer: We completely agree that having a time frame on item availability is extremely important. The current system configuration of NBS does not yet have the ability to display when a backordered item will be available. While we work with our system partner, NBS, to gain this functionality, the best option is to contact our Customer Service Specialists, who can provide support on estimated lead time, available product substitutions, and more.

Question: Can the Supply Store order or request frequently requested items so that shelves are fully stocked?

Answer: Yes. Please let us know what items you want on the shelves. Please email us at NIHSC-CustomerService@od.nih.gov to let us know your most utilized, repeat purchase items so we can ensure a replenishment for the fastmoving items that you need.

Question: What is the estimated timeline for NIHSC “modernization”? What are you modernizing?

Answer: We are modernizing all aspects of our business and system processes that will make it a better shopping experience for you: a modern e-store front, a dynamic, robust product portfolio, reducing the number of steps to place an order, innovative ways to bring products to people (for example, the portable kiosks), etc. We expect to go live with many of these changes and modernizations in FY23-FY24, with the help of our system partners, NBS and POTS.



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