

Rethinking Safety Basics in a Robotics Lab

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February 07, 2026

When I think of “lab safety,” my mind usually jumps to chemicals, PPE, or heavy machinery. Our robotics lab doesn’t look like that at all. It looks like laptops, students coding, and humanoid robots sitting quietly in the corner.

So honestly, I never thought of it as “hazardous.”

Taking these photos changed that.

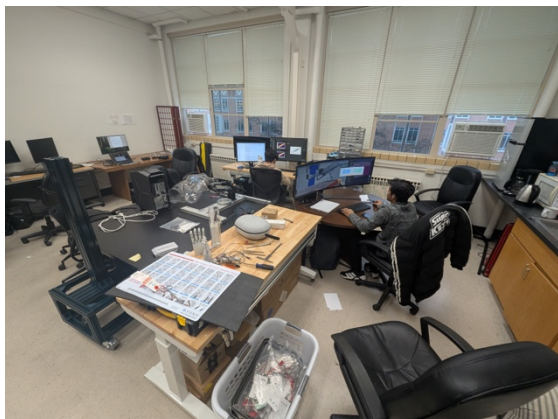


Walking around with a camera forced me to slow down and actually look at the space the way a visitor would. And suddenly the everyday stuff jumped out.

The first thing I noticed was the floor.

Cables everywhere. Power strips under desks. Extension cords running past chairs and heaters. We step over them so often that

they’ve basically become invisible. But if someone new walked in or if we had to move fast in an emergency it’s clearly a trip hazard.



Then the benches.

Tools, boxes, spare parts, half-opened packaging... all the “I’ll put this away later” items that quietly

accumulate during research. Nothing dangerous by itself, but together it makes the space cluttered and harder to navigate safely.

The most surprising one for me was the robots.

We store Pepper robot units and hardware cases on the floor because it's convenient. But that means we're literally walking around knee-height equipment and power cables. It's easy to forget that these are heavy, expensive machines that could tip, get damaged, or cause someone to trip.



Nothing fancy. Just paying attention.

This exercise reminded me that safety culture isn't about big rules — it's about noticing the basics before they become problems.



None of these issues felt urgent day-to-day, which is exactly why we ignored them.

But seeing them all at once in photos made it obvious: our biggest risks aren't dramatic but they're the small things we've normalized.

Since taking these pictures, we've started doing small fixes such as moving power strips off the floor, routing cables along walls, designating storage spots, keeping walkways clear, and doing quick weekly clean-ups.