


# Customer Segment Story: RESEARCH INSTITUTIONS

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*“We collect biological samples and other data from over 100,000 study participants diagnosed with cancer. Our institutional review board requires that the signed consent forms from these participants must be stored in a fireproof container.”*

*– Michelle Karp, Office Manager,  
The International Epidemiology  
Institute, Jacksonville, FL*

Conducting extensive research experiments is fundamental when it comes to assessing, preventing, and attempting to create solutions to the world’s collective problems or concerns. Research can be performed for any number of reasons, to cure a disease, to find out consumer opinions, to identify a strength or weakness in a product, or to determine how things like loneliness and depression affect different animals. Whatever the reason for the study, it is imperative that the subjects are treated ethically and that the results are guarded carefully. It does not matter whether the length of the study is as short as one day or as long as one hundred years – if the results are lost or destroyed, the effort was completely futile.

Research institutions of all kinds need to fully protect themselves, and more importantly, their findings, at all cost. Proactively installing properly tested fire suppression equipment and using adequate fireproof records storage to house vital documents are ways these institutions can insure that the results of their hard work will be safe from fire, flood, theft, or other disaster. Waiting until it is too late to take precautionary measures to protect essential information can waste money, time and effort involved in the research project.

Scientific research institutes provide various settings for different outcomes desired by the initiating body. For example, Mitotyping Technologies, located in Pennsylvania, provides forensic applications of mitochondrial DNA analysis for civil, criminal, and federal cases to defense and prosecution teams, law enforcement agencies, and private individuals. Mitotyping’s president, Dr. Terry Melton explains why using fireproof vital record storage is important for her institute:

“At Mitotyping Technologies, we store all of our forensic DNA testing results in our 4-drawer FireKing fireproof filing cabinets. We have a total of five in our office and would definitely use them even if they were not required for state accreditation by the New York State Department of Health; it is just a good business practice to protect your important information, whether forced or not.”

In some clinical studies, research cannot even commence without proper protection. Experiments are often put on hold until all the requirements for accurate testing and ethical treatment of subjects have been met. Michelle Karp, Office Manager at

The International Epidemiology Institute, in Jacksonville, FL, has been taking care of the administrative tasks involved in the long-term study of cancer in the southern states.

“The Institute began its study on cancer patients in the South about three years ago,” said Karp. “We collect biological samples and other data from over 100,000 participants diagnosed with cancer. Our institutional review board requires that the signed consent forms from these participants be stored in a fireproof container. We purchased ten FireKing fireproof filing cabinets before the study could even begin. As this study will go on for decades, the consent forms will be protected from destruction because of the safety provided by the FireKings.”

Most research institutions use an unbiased third party observer to ensure that the testing procedures and results are not a product of inaccuracy and that the subjects were not put in any unethical situations. In fact, the US Food and Drug Administration provides very particular guidelines for these institutional review boards and clinical investigators when it comes to the protection of human subjects in research experiments. The FDA has created nine volumes of regulations that apply to clinical investigations and govern the development and approval of drugs, biologics, and devices.

The regulations put on the researcher and the institutional review boards (IRB) by the FDA are enforced once the researcher develops protocol. The role of the IRB is to review the protocol and the rights of potential subjects before monitors from the experiment’s sponsor visit the site and make further recommendations. Casey Mitchell, Director of Regulatory Affairs for Sterling IRB is an expert when it comes to what research facilities need to do for compliancy issues.

“Currently there is no governing body that requires fireproof record protection on a national level,” Mitchell said. “However, some individual states and most sponsors will require that certain data must be kept safe from destruction for the length of the study. Keeping research results and consent forms protected in a fireproof container seems to be one of the best ways to do so.”

It is always a good business practice to keep vital information that is specific to your business or industry safe from fire, flood, theft, or any other type of disaster. Doing so proactively will help the rebuilding process after a disaster. Losing important research documents is something that no facility can afford to face. The benefits of loss prevention plans that include a fully tested fireproof filing cabinet clearly surpass the costs.