



Addressing WH&SQ Concerns - Part 5a

WH&S Update 14/15

Issue five: safe handling and storage of chemicals

Chemicals can be nasty things to deal with. They come in different forms: solids, liquids and gas. Many chemicals can affect your health. Some chemicals, such as ozone and formalin, can kill within seconds. Other chemicals can burn your skin, destroy your lungs, give you cancer, affect your digestive system, poison you, and even make you sterile. Some chemicals are even volatile and can burn or explode if not handled correctly. To avoid hazards and reduce safety risks, you need to know how to store and handle chemicals in a safe way.

When dealing with chemicals, you need to observe the following rules:

1. label all chemicals
2. store chemicals safely
3. enforce safe procedures when transporting chemicals (see Issue 16)
4. check the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) before using chemicals (see Issue 16)
5. wear protective gear when dealing with chemicals (see Issue 16)
6. never touch, taste or smell chemicals (see Issue 16).

In the next few editions we will outline these rules in more detail.

Rule 1: label all chemicals

Chemicals should always be labelled to identify what the chemical is. The label should also identify any hazards associated with the use of that chemical. Label information includes:

1. the name of the chemical
2. the concentration (strength) of the chemical
3. information about hazards associated with the chemical
4. emergency information ("If accidentally swallowed...")
5. the name of the manufacturer
6. the date of manufacture

If you need to replace the label because it has worn down, then make sure you include as much information as possible (from points 1 – 6 above) on the new label and NEVER write over any chemical labels.

Rule 2: safe storage

Chemicals must always be stored in a safe place with similar type chemicals and you should NEVER store chemicals with food items.

Most chemicals will belong to a specific category and you need to make sure that only chemicals from the

same category are stored together. If you're not sure what category a chemical belongs to, always check its label, or refer to its MSDS. Categories might include:



A good chemical storage area should have:

- good ventilation to keep the area cool and prevent the build up of fumes or gases
- solid walls and roof to protect the contents from wind and rain
- solid and water-proof floors so that spills don't soak into the earth and pests can't dig their way in
- good lighting so you can see what you're doing in the area
- separate shelves or cabinets to store items that should not be together
- cloths and sponges nearby to clean up spills
- a water supply and hose nearby for clean up
- personal protective equipment such as gloves, aprons and respirators outside so that these can be worn before you enter the area
- a lock on the door.

Contact Lisa Dwyer or Simone Porter 3915 4222 or email esm@brismark.com.au for any of your WH&S requirements.