

Chemical Inventories and Labeling

Chemical Inventory

Managing an effective and accurate chemical inventory system is a crucial part of any robust environmental health and safety program. A dated inventory of incoming chemicals and their quantities must be kept in each laboratory. Upon complete use of the material or transfer to another lab, the material must be removed from the list. Many researchers prefer to keep a copy of the inventory on the laboratory door. This is an excellent method of alerting emergency responders of the chemicals stored and in use in the laboratory. The OEHS will request a copy of the chemical inventory annually. The OEHS copy is used in creating a master list of hazardous chemicals required for maintaining compliance with the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA).

A good chemical inventory program is absolutely invaluable from a compliance standpoint. Federal, state, and local laws create complex and overlapping web of permits, licenses, and regulations, many of which depend on substances in use in your lab. With a good chemical inventory program, you will know the quantities of flammables in each space and can ensure they are not above the regulated amount. An even more immediate benefit of a strong chemical inventory program is that of cost savings. Anyone in the facility can instantly find out how much of any given chemical onsite is. Researchers can instantly find out if there is a bottle of a required chemical in the building before purchasing a new one. Researchers can then take the exact amount they need, instead of buying some, using a little bit, and putting the bottle on the shelf to gather dust.

- 1) Review the chemical inventory annually
- 2) Mark the opening date on all the chemical containers
- 3) Make sure that peroxide formers are not expired
- 4) Make sure unwanted and decomposed chemicals disposed regularly
- 5) Redistribute the chemicals that are no longer in use within the department or to other departments through OEHS

For each chemical you purchase, you should also receive a Safety Data Sheet (SDS). If you don't receive an SDS, call the supplier for a copy. It is the responsibility of the person requesting the purchase of the chemical to insure that the SDS have been placed in an area in which the users have access. Additionally, the OEHS web page <http://www.uah.edu/oehs> has links to SDS sites.

Labeling

All chemical containers (including laboratory solutions, lab synthesized materials and mixtures) used in the laboratory must have labels indicating what they are.

- Labels must indicate the components, their quantities, and a date. Commercial bottles must have a “date of opening”.
- Containers without appropriate labeling will be treated as an unknown chemical. Unknown chemicals and wastes present safety, environmental, regulatory, and monetary concerns. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that all chemical containers are appropriately labeled.