

HEALTH SAFETY & WELLBEING

Hazard Alert

Inappropriate Chemical Management

OVERVIEW

Health, Safety & Wellbeing (HSW) are currently conducting chemical spot checks across the University to get a better understanding of how chemicals are managed in practice.

Whilst these spot checks are still ongoing, there have already been some significant findings. This Alert outlines some common hazards and provides a clear call to action for all persons working with or around chemicals. For the purposes of this Alert, chemicals include dangerous goods and hazardous substances.

HAZARDS

- Excessive storage of chemicals within laboratories or rooms
- Chemicals inappropriately stored, or held for long periods of time, not within chemical cabinets e.g. on shelves, workbenches and/or in fume hoods
- Chemical containers are corroded, leaking, imploded or not properly sealed
- Flammable liquids and/or flammable liquid cabinets within close proximity to ignition sources
- Incompatible chemicals stored together within chemical cabinets
- Chemicals stored in a disorganised or unsafe manner and general poor housekeeping (clutter)
- Chemical cabinets which are damaged e.g. doors not self-closing, missing or broken handles
- Chemicals being stored in the sump of a DG cabinet. Sumps are specifically designed to contain spills within the cabinet and no items should be stored there
- Chemicals stored in inappropriate and unlabeled cupboards. Chemicals unlabeled, or labels are missing, weathered or otherwise illegible
- Evidence of spills which had not been cleaned up

RESPONSIBILITIES FOR MANAGING THE RISK

Everybody at Monash has a role to play in positive health and safety. All staff, students and contractors must take reasonable care of their own health and safety and how their actions may impact others including by the use, storage and disposal of chemicals. All staff, students, contractors and visitors at Monash also have a responsibility to speak up on Health, Safety or Wellbeing concerns.

Management, including Operational Managers, Supervisors, Senior Leadership Teams, Heads of School/Institutes, are ultimately accountable for the HSW outcomes within their areas of control. As such, they are required to review their local area health and safety management systems to ensure: compliance is achieved and maintained; storage of chemicals is appropriate, with volumes reduced to what is actually required and workplaces are clean and free of clutter.

ACTIONS REQUIRED

If you work in a laboratory, or workshop with chemicals, review your chemical storage practices. You might find it useful to ask yourself and your colleagues the following questions:

- Do we need to retain this quantity of chemicals? Can we reduce the volume we hold in our work area?
- Do we have **appropriate** storage for all chemicals in our work area? NOTE: All chemicals should be put away into the appropriate storage once use is completed. Appropriate storage means within a suitable chemical cabinet **not** within a fume hood, on the bench top, floor or shelf.
- Have I identified any hazards (such as those listed above) that I can not easily and safely mitigate? If so you have a responsibility to report these into SARAH and work with your Supervisor to manage.

For advice on appropriate management of chemicals, speak to your Supervisor or Safety Officer, or contact the Health, Safety & Wellbeing on hsw@monash.edu

DISPOSING OF UNWANTED ITEMS

Chemical disposal: please contact [Monash Stores](#)

Maintenance requests: please submit a [work order to Buildings & Property](#) or via the [Helpdesk](#)

For advice on appropriate management of chemicals, speak to your Supervisor or Safety Officer, or contact Health, Safety & Wellbeing at hsw@monash.edu




HAZARDS & INCIDENTS

If you spot a hazard such as those listed above, you must ensure you:

1. do what you can immediately to safely mitigate this e.g. replace chemicals into their appropriate storage cabinet, safely clean up spills after consulting relevant safety data sheets (SDS);
2. report hazards and incidents into the SARAH system as soon as possible, preferably before the end of the shift, and no later than within one working day.

If there is an **immediate or significant risk to health and safety**, contact the most appropriate below support services, as required: Emergency Services via 000; Monash Security via (03) 9905 3333.

IMAGES OF INAPPROPRIATE CHEMICAL STORAGE

	
<p>Image 1: Excessive chemicals, stored in a disorganised & unsafe manner</p>	<p>Image 2: Leaking and corroded chemical containers</p>
	
<p>Image 3: Imploded chemical container</p>	<p>Image 4: Chemical cabinet with broken door</p>

Additional Resources:

- [Victorian Dangerous Goods \(Storage and Handling\) Regulations 2022](#)
- [AS 3833 The Storage and Handling of mixed class dangerous goods in packages & bulk containers](#)
- [Chemical Management](#) including [Chemical Waste Disposal](#)
- [HSW Roles & Responsibilities](#) and [Managing HSW Hazards & Incidents](#)