



SAFETY ALERT

Campus Incident—Chemical Release

RISK MANAGEMENT & SAFETY

Date: June 16, 2014
Category: Chemical Hygiene
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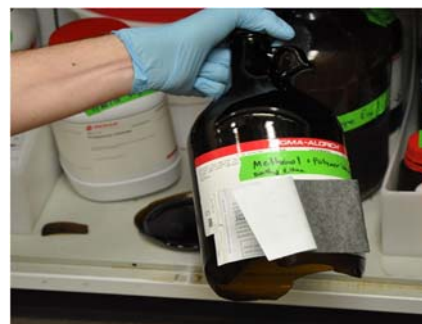
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Description

A 2 liter glass waste container cracked releasing chemical inside storage cabinet and into lab below & vapors escaped into the building. The waste was in a storage cabinet beneath a lab hood. NDFD ordered building evacuation. Three personnel reported feeling ill. They were evaluated & released without treatment. The building was ventilated by opening doors & windows. After which the odors dissipated.

Photo of Broken Container In Storage Cabinet where spill originated



Findings

- The container failed at the base and was not placed into secondary containment inside the cabinet.
- The cabinet storing waste was full and did not have any backing.
- Two personnel did not evacuate the building.
- The ventilation system in the building is not balanced. Labs are under positive pressure. Air movement can be heard when opening doors to the stairwells.

Root Causes

- Chemical odors were present in building due to unbalanced ventilation system.
- It's believed that the container failed because its contents vaporized & created pressure. The cap was secured preventing pressure to relieve causing the bottle to break at the base.
- The contents leaked out due to lack of cabinet storage space for secondary containment. Lack of storage space was due to inadequate waste pickup schedule.
- There was no backing installed on waste cabinet.

Recommended Actions

- Determine ideal waste pickup frequency.
- Balance ventilation systems to ensure labs are under negative pressure.
- Require use of secondary containment for all waste containers.
- Enclose the waste storage cabinet and investigate all other cabinets in building to verify that they are built properly.
- Conduct building evacuation training/drills for building.