Unknown Chemicals

Unknown chemicals pose unnecessary risks to employees, students, and visitors at the University. Without a legible chemical label, safe handling, storage, and disposal become compromised. Since the potential hazards remain uncertain, unknown chemicals must be managed as hazardous waste and require chemical analysis prior to transport and disposal. The costs of analysis may be passed on to the laboratory or department where the unknown chemicals were generated. The following steps should be taken to identify unknown chemicals.

- Speak with the principal investigator, laboratory manager, current researchers, or previous researchers who may have knowledge of the unknown chemical.
- Provide any useful information that will aid in identification of the unknown chemical to Environmental Health and Safety (e.g., acid vs. base, organic vs. inorganic, halogenated vs. non-halogenated, etc.).
- If the information gathered is insufficient, NEVER guess as to the contents of the container.

The following steps should be taken to eliminate the generation of unknown chemicals.

- Immediately replace labels on original or secondary containers that have fallen off or become illegible.
- Label all secondary chemical containers (e.g., carboys, flasks, jars, vials, etc.).
- Use full chemical names to describe contents (i.e., no chemical abbreviations, symbols, etc.).
- Label boxes containing multiple small sample vials or containers with the chemical name(s) on the outside of the box.
- Dispose of chemicals with no foreseeable use through EHS.

If an unknown chemical cannot be identified, do not pour it down the sink, mix it with other chemicals or abandon it in the work area. Keep the material in the laboratory and contact **Environmental Health and Safety**.