

Management of Unknown Chemicals

Unknown chemicals pose unnecessary risks to researchers and staff at the University. Without an accurate label on each container, 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 are often passed on to the labs or departments where the unknown chemicals were generated. The following steps should be taken to identify unknown chemicals.

- Speak with the principal investigator, other researchers currently working in the lab, or previous researchers from the lab that may have knowledge of the unknown chemical.
- Any information provided can aid in accurate identification (e.g., acid vs. base, organic vs. inorganic, halogenated vs. non-halogenated, etc.)
- Provide all the information to DEHS. 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.

- Label all chemical containers, whether hazardous or not.
- Immediately replace labels that have fallen off or become illegible.
- Use full chemical names to describe chemicals (i.e. no abbreviations, chemical symbols, etc.)
- Boxes containing many small vials should have a label with specific chemical names on the outside of the box.
- Dispose of materials and chemicals with no foreseeable use through DEHS.

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 & Safety** at **860-486-3613** for further guidance.