

SAFETY ALERT

OSHA Citation: Unlabeled Chemical Containers

Incident

In May of 2015, the Minnesota Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was on site conducting an inspection and found two unlabeled bottles of denatured alcohol in a grinding room on the St Paul Campus. This was considered a serious violation and a regulatory citation was issued which included a \$1,200 fine to the research program.

The Rule

All containers used to store hazardous substances (e.g., acids/bases, formalin, alcohol, etc.), except for immediate use containers, must be labeled with the name of the substance and an appropriate hazard warning (or an equally effective method to communicate the contents and hazards). The rule is intended to protect lab workers and emergency responders from unintended exposures to unknown hazardous substances. In addition to the regulatory concern, unlabeled containers left behind when labs are closed or abandoned can require significant time and resources to identify and properly dispose of unknown substances.

What Is Being Done to Address This Risk?

All supervisors and employees working with hazardous substances receive training describing labeling requirements for chemical containers and are responsible to enforce and follow safe work practices for labeling. Labeling practices are also reviewed during work area inspections and audits.

Actions for Supervisors and Employees

Inspect your work areas frequently to ensure all containers used to store hazardous chemicals are labeled with the chemical name and appropriate hazard warnings (immediate use containers are excluded from this requirement).

Any time a regulatory agency comes to your work area to do an inspection, **immediately** notify University Health and Safety at (612) 626-6002.

Additional information: [OSHA Quickfacts chemical labeling and transfer](#)

If you have questions regarding this alert, contact University Health and Safety at (612) 626-6002.

Incorrect Labeling



Correct Labeling

