

# RISK CONTROL CONSULTING

## Chemical Storage

There are many work situations where chemicals are routinely relied upon to get the work done. But just as important as the safe handling of these chemicals, is their safe storage. If not stored properly, chemicals can cause a fire, explosion or personal injury. There are some real and common sense safe storage procedures that should be followed to keep workers and the workplace free of chemical-related accidents.

1. The most important factor in chemical storage safety is keeping chemicals in their original containers.
2. Next, check that each chemical container has a label. The label is a quick way of determining whether the material is a fire, health or reactivity hazard.
3. Read the chemical's Safety Data Sheet (SDS). The SDS describes the chemical's properties, hazards, and what to do if there's an accidental spill or exposure. Use the SDS as a guide for making storage decisions.
4. Store chemicals in well-ventilated areas, away from direct sunlight or other heat source, and away from sparks, flames, static electricity or other sources of ignition.
5. Make sure the storage shelving material is acid resistant, secured to a permanent structure, and strong enough to support the weight of the containers.
6. The shelving should be fitted with a raised lip or tilted slightly backward so containers won't slip off the edge. You may choose to color code the containers to correspond to the color on the shelf where it should be stored for quick access and proper storage return.



to a sink, oxides next to flammables, acids next to bases or poisons next to a desk.

7. Never store chemicals higher than eye level. If the chemical is accidentally knocked over you could risk being showered with the chemical substance resulting in a burn or possible blindness.

8. For added safety, make sure first aid kits and materials for cleaning spilled chemicals is readily accessible.

9. Chemicals should be placed so that incompatible substances are stored apart. You don't want to store a water reactive chemical next



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10. Chemicals should never be stored or refrigerated with food.
11. Chemical containers should not be stored on top of each other or on the floor where they could accidentally be knocked over.
12. Don't casually leave chemical containers wherever you last use them or set them aside to make room for other work. Take the time to return containers to their proper storage place.

### Maintenance is Another Important Factor in Safe Chemical Storage.

Someone should be assigned to periodically inventory the chemicals not only to check for proper storage but to also check for damaged or corroded containers, signs of leakage or container pressure buildup. Make sure empty or damaged chemicals are disposed of properly. Accidents caused by improper chemical storage can be prevented. Read labels, follow MSDS recommendations, and use common sense. Instruct workers on safe chemical handling and enforce safe chemical storage procedures.

Chemicals come in various forms and can affect those exposed in different ways. A chemical can take the form of a mist, vapor, liquid, dust, fume or gas. The type of chemical, the way it is used, and the form that it takes determine its effect and what should be done to avoid harmful exposure.

### Some basic safety precautions should be understood and followed including:

1.	Know what to do in an emergency. If there is a leak or spill, keep away from the area, unless you know what the chemical is and how to safely clean it up. Know where emergency protective equipment and supplies kept and how to use them.
2.	Use appropriate protective clothing and equipment (glasses, aprons, boots, gloves, etc.) as required or as necessary.
3.	If the clothing becomes contaminated by the chemical, shower or wash the skin areas exposed. Change and decontaminate clothing (or dispose of clothing if it is designed for single use).
4.	Do not take contaminated clothing home to be laundered because by doing so, it could expose family members to the contaminant.
5.	When working with chemicals, always wash hands thoroughly before eating. If necessary, shower and change clothes before going home.
6.	Never take food into the work area where chemicals are being used or stored.
7.	If work will be done in an area where there is a possibility of exposure to toxic substances, use a buddy system or establish an emergency communication system. A worker can be dangerously exposed or overcome by a chemical and need immediate assistance.
8.	Keep the workplace clean to reduce the risk of contamination. Where possible, wipe up and absorb the contaminant, using proper protective equipment as required. Clean up spills immediately and dispose of contaminated material properly. With some chemicals a vacuum is recommended for clean up rather than a broom or compressed air. The idea is to collect and confine the contaminant, not just spread it around.
9.	Workers should know the company's system for identifying hazardous chemicals. They should know and understand the specific health and safety hazards of the chemicals with which they work and follow the recommended safety precautions. All workers should be trained in proper chemical storage and disposal procedures and know what to do for first aid and emergencies.

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This Tribal First Risk Control Consulting fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice. For more information on this topic, please contact Tribal First Risk Control Consulting at (888) 737-4752 or [riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com](mailto:riskcontrol@tribalfirst.com).