

Unlabeled Chemicals

Unlabeled chemicals present potential hazards and are expensive to dispose. The following are classified as "Unlabeled Chemicals": bottles without a label, containers labeled with only codes, generic process labels that do not specifically list chemicals contained, and obviously mislabeled chemicals. Note: Tradenames are not considered unlabeled chemicals, but an MSDS should be obtained from the company.

A surcharge is assessed for the disposal of unlabeled chemicals by our waste handler; the following steps should be taken to eliminate them from your storage:

You should attempt to locate the person responsible for the unlabeled container, who should be able to provide some clues to its contents. (Departments should not allow students/staff to vacate a laboratory without first identifying all containers.)

If the actual person is no longer available on campus, information about the type of research done is usually helpful. Contact former coworkers; ask what chemicals were commonly used in the laboratory, what was created in research, etc. Often this information will provide some important clues to a chemical's identity.

Peroxidizable compounds such as ethers, dioxanes, tetrahydrofuran, etc., absorb and react with oxygen to form potentially explosive compounds with time. Exposure to air and light accelerates these formations. Therefore, if your unlabeled LIQUID has partially or fully evaporated and crystals are present (or the liquid has become unclear), label the container as "POSSIBLE PEROXIDE" and request assistance from ORS by calling 2-4996.

On occasion, unlabeled chemicals contain radioactive materials. If you have access to a Geiger counter, check the container to determine if the material is radioactive. If radioactivity is found request assistance from the Radiation Safety Officer by calling 2-4996.

On occasion, unlabeled chemicals could contain biological materials. If you have any reason to suspect a biohazard request assistance from ORS by calling 2-4996.