

## Are You A Chemical Hoarder?

Is your lab's chemical storage area a nostalgic trip to the previous century? Can you chronicle the evolution of JT Baker's labeling system from the fabulous fifties through Y2K? Do your solvents remember the eighties? Are your storage cabinets so crowded that you cannot find materials that you need – so you order more? If so, you are a chemical hoarder!



### How OLD is it?



Unlike fine wines, chemicals **do not** get better with age. They clump up, dry out, degrade and may become unstable. The tops crack, and the labels fall off. Even if these relics pose no extraordinary hazard, they take up precious space. Some chemicals like ether and picric acid actually become explosive as they age.

### Legacy Chemicals

Unfortunately, this goes on until the dreaded lab audit when OH&S cites you for improper storage, too many flammables, poor housekeeping, and 'legacy' chemicals. A legacy chemical is an unused and unwanted chemical left behind by a previous occupant of the laboratory or abandoned by the current occupant.

### "We need to have a talk..."

Before you begin, put on a clean, buttoned, long-sleeved lab coat or disposable gown, the appropriate gloves, and safety goggles for the job. Clear off a space, carefully remove all those bottles, and ask each question before you put it back into place:

- Did I order the chemical, or at least know it came from a reliable source?
- Is the chemical in date, uncontaminated, with no signs of chemical or physical change?
  - If the answer to these is 'no' to both of these questions, then pack it up as waste.
- Is the container in good condition (no leaks, bulging or discolored containers, broken or missing tops)?
- Is the chemical properly labeled as per the GHS guidelines?
  - If the chemical is still in good shape, but the container is showing wear and tear – transfer the material to a new, compatible container and re-label it.
  - Otherwise – **dispose of it as hazardous waste.**

### Surplus? Share!

If you have a chemical that is still usable, but do not need it now and do not see a need in the near future – offer the chemical to someone who needs it. Check with your department or call OH&S to let others on campus know that the surplus chemical is available.

Once the clutter and excess is gone, your lab will be both cleaner and safer.