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From: Meredith Brown <racer@lanl.gov>
Subject: Blue Alert: Empty Container Disposal

Title: Disposal of Empty Containers in Offsite Trash Dumpster

Identifier: Formal Lessons Learned Report, 1998-KO-SNL-0002

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Lessons Learned Statement: Do not take empty chemical containers from government property or contractorsites. Even if the empty containers are allowable in public trash, thegeneral public may become alarmed if chemical containers are found in household trash. Dispose of empty containers per instructions in the contractor ES&H Manual.

Discussion of Activities: An employee took empty chemical bottles from the work site to a private apartment and disposed of the bottles in a trash dumpster. Another person saw the bottles in the trash and called the fire department. The fire department responded, cordoned off the area, and assessed the hazard. After finding that the bottles were empty, they saw that the bottles had barcode labels on them indicating that they came from the contractor company.

Further investigation found an employee's name on a label on the packaging associated with the bottles. The Fire Department personnel located the name in the telephone directory. There was a listing for a person by that name with an address at the apartment complex where the bottles were found. The bottles were returned to the work site and disposed of properly. The employee was appropriately disciplined.

Analysis: The employee was not aware of the requirements in the contractor ES&H Manual concerning the proper disposal of empty containers even though the appropriate training course for hazardous waste disposal had been completed.

This incident resulted in the deployment of six fire-fighters from the local fire department to respond to the hazardous materials call. This had the potential of diverting responders from more serious calls.

Recommended Actions: Dispose of empty containers per instructions in the contractor ES&H Manual. Call your Center ES&H Coordinator or Waste Generator Liaison for assistance.

Originator: M. Wayne Davis, (505) 844-6734
Contact: Merri Lewis, SNL Lessons Learned Coordinator
ES&H Lessons Learned Program, Sandia National Laboratories
Albuquerque, NM 87185-1177 (505) 844-6523
Authorized Derivative Classifier: John Lewis
Reviewing Official (as needed): Bess Campbell-Domme
Priority Descriptor: Blue/Lessons Learned

DOE Functional Category(s): Training and Qualification, Safety

User-Defined Functional Category: Training and Qualification, Safety, Conduct of Operations

Key Words: Improper Disposal

References: Albuquerque Fire Department

Information in this report is accurate to the best of our knowledge. As a means of measuring the effectiveness of the SNL Lessons Learned Program, please inform Merri Lewis at (505) 844-6523 of any action taken within your area, as a response to this report, or of any technical inaccuracies you have found. Your feedback is important and appreciated.