

**THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG  
UNIVERSITY SAFETY & ENVIRONMENT OFFICE**

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**MEMO**

To : Please see distribution list (\*)

c.c. : Professor Jack Cheng, Chairman, Committee on Safety  
Professor Michael Tam, Chairman, Safety Advisory Committee -  
Chemical / Carcinogens  
Director, Estates Management Office

From : S.K. Lam  
Safety Manager & Chief Laboratory Safety Officer

Date : 15 June 2007

Subject : **Fire Incidents at Garbage Collection Facilities**

Two cases of fire incidents related to waste chemical containers were reported at garbage collection facilities in the last few weeks.

After the first incident on 15 May, a safety circular has been issued by the Safety Office to departmental safety coordinators advising on proper disposal methods of empty chemical containers.

Unfortunately, the second fire incident occurred on 11 June while empty chemical containers were mechanically crashed on FEHD (Food & environmental Hygiene Department) garbage truck (please see photo attached).

The fire did not result in property damage but the incident was enough to raise the concerns of the FEHD staff and the case has been reported to FEHD management for follow-up actions which may be of legal or administrative in nature.

The current practice requires users to send empty chemical containers to designated garbage collection point at the Science Centre and EMO colleagues will collect the garbage and transport them to the Refuse Collection Depot (RCD) located at the Eastern Campus. The garbage will then be taken away by FEHD trucks for disposal.

To avoid the occurrence of similar incidents, several measures are now being considered by the Safety Office. However, long-term remedial measures involve additional space and resources which requires further considerations and consultation.

As an interim measure, all chemicals supplied by the Dangerous Goods Service Unit (DGSU) of the Safety Office will have labels affix on the bottles/containers indicating the room number of the laboratory which ordered the chemicals. Users must not remove the labels which should remain on the bottles/containers from delivery till disposal.

For chemicals which are purchased by the users themselves or those chemical bottles/containers already kept in the laboratories, users are advised to affix labels indicating the room number of the laboratory where they are kept.

Garbage collection station will not accept empty chemical bottles / containers without the labels.

It is important that chemical users should ensure that all chemicals have been removed from the bottles/containers after which, the bottles/containers should be properly washed before disposal. Advices from the Safety Office should be sought when bottle/container washing becomes a safety concern.

The above measures will have minimal impacts on the workload of your colleagues and your cooperation in disseminating the information to responsible staff will be much appreciated.

For further information or comments on the measures, please feel free to contact the undersigned at ext. 7864.

S.K. Lam  
Safety Manager & Chief Laboratory Safety Officer

SKL/jk



Remain of Broken Chemical Container and Cap after the fire was put out

(\*) **Distribution List:**

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