Lesson Learned Briefing

No.: LL12-0016

Title: Receipt of leaking container of hazardous material

Event: LBNL Event

Event Date: 03/05/2012

Category: ES&H - Chemical Hygiene

Lesson Learned Statement:
Chemical containers may become damaged during packaging and shipment, and contents may leak out, all before the materials even reach Berkeley Lab. This can occur even if the packaging material itself appears intact and undamaged from the outside.

- Anticipate hazards, and use proper personal protective equipment and other appropriate controls when opening and removing chemicals from shipping materials.

- Report unsafe conditions like damaged chemical containers to line management and division safety coordinators.

Discussion:
An employee received a package containing a bottle of hydrochloric acid that had been shipped from a manufacturer. The packaging material appeared normal with no apparent damage. Anticipating the possibility of a hazard, the worker wore personal protective equipment including a lab coat, safety glasses and 2 pairs of nitrile gloves, placed the package under a dedicated exhaust system and proceeded to open the package.

Upon opening the packaging material and removing the chemical container, she noted that the plastic cap seal was broken and that some of the hydrochloric acid had leaked out. Some chemical got on her glove, which she immediately removed. She then reported the incident to management and the division safety coordinator. The chemical container and the nitrile gloves were treated as hazardous waste and disposed of accordingly.

The worker was protected from injury because she anticipated and planned for the hazard, and used effective work controls. There are reports of at least two prior incidents at Berkeley Lab where effective controls were not used in similar circumstances, which resulted in exposures and injuries.

Priority Boxes: ☐ ORPS Reportable   ☐ OSHA Recordable   ☐ PAAA   ☐ Other

ISM Code:

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