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Lessons learned:

Waste Splash Causing a Chemical Burn



What happened?

During a waste handling in the lab, a student took a 5 liters waste container out of the chemical hood. The chemicals inside the container were trimethyl amine (considered a stench chemical) and vinylbenzyl chloride. The container was completely full, and the lid was not fastened properly. While slightly tilting the container out through the sash, liquid waste spilled onto the student's arm, penetrated through the lab coat and thick clothing, and contacted his skin, causing a chemical skin burn. The student washed his arm thoroughly, and after several requests sought medical assistance. In addition, a severe stench from the spill spread in the faculty.



What went wrong?

The chemical waste bottle was completely full instead of 80% full.

The lid was not properly fastened.

The student did not seek medical help immediately.



What went right?

The student read all relevant SDSs and took the relevant safety tutorials.

The student was wearing complete PPE.

The student immediately washed his arm for 15 minutes.



How to prevent similar incidents in the future?

Waste containers should be filled up to 80% of their volume.

Stench chemicals should be sealed with parafilm and placed in a secondary container. Labs with stench chemicals should write a SOP on handling these chemicals.