

# safety matters

Education

From your safety partners at Peabody Insurance Agency

## Handling Chemical Spills in the Classroom

Storing or handling chemicals in your classroom puts you and your students at risk for injuries due to spills, leaks or explosions. For this reason, the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that any workplace where hazardous chemicals are used must have an emergency action plan (EAP). Peabody Insurance takes this requirement seriously, as employee and student safety is our top priority. The plan describes the procedures to follow during an emergency, such as a chemical spill, leak or explosion, including:

- Who to notify
- Who is in charge and who else has responsibilities in responding to the incident
- Who is responsible for each task
- How to evacuate the site

OSHA also requires all employees to be trained in EAP procedures, so that everyone is prepared. Notify your superior if you have not yet had training in EAP procedures or if you would like a refresher.

### Prevention

The first priority when working with chemicals is to try and prevent a spill, leak or explosion. You can contribute to that goal by:

- Knowing and understanding the chemicals you're working with, including any hazards—refer to the appropriate Safety Data Sheet (SDS) or ask questions if you are unsure
- Following all safety precautions
- Helping to make sure all chemicals are properly labeled in their container
- Teaching students about the chemicals they may be handling, including hazards, proper safety procedures and protective gear that should be worn, and doing everything possible to keep students from tampering with these chemicals.

### When an Incident Occurs

To determine if a chemical spill, leak or explosion is hazardous or requires special cleanup procedures:

- Identify the chemical(s) involved.

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- Refer to the SDS for any chemical involved to find out how flammable and/or reactive it is, what protective equipment is needed and spill cleanup procedures.
- For chemicals resulting in a hazardous fire or explosion, refer to the SDS also for firefighting instructions.

### **Emergency Procedures**

In the event of a chemical spill, leak or explosion, be sure to:

- Immediately notify your supervisor.
- Notify other teachers in the area.
- Activate emergency alarms.
- Call 911.
- Keep students out of the area and explain how they can behave safely in the situation.
- Leave the area if the spill cannot be readily contained, or if it presents an immediate danger to life or health.
- Follow the evacuation rules in the EAP.
- Leave cleanup to trained personnel, such as a Hazardous Materials team.

Do not try to:

- Rescue or help injured people unless you are sure you will be safe
- Clean up a spill yourself, except where permitted by the EAP

OSHA requires these safety measures, and so do we. It is our hope that an accident like this never happens, but all employees and students should be prepared in case it does. Make sure you learn these precautions and follow them if you ever must respond to a hazardous chemical spill, leak or explosion, to help keep yourself, your co-workers and your students safe.