



Toolbox Talk: Using Chemicals Safely at Home

Introduction/Overview:

In the workplace, we follow strict guidelines when working with chemicals. But have you thought of using those same guidelines at home? Most households have at least basic cleaning supplies. These chemicals can be dangerous, but then you add gasoline, oil, kerosene, carbon monoxide, medications, and others then you have a recipe for disaster.

Household chemicals cause harm through four primary routes: Ingestion, absorption, injection and inhalation.

Whenever we are exposed to potentially dangerous chemicals day in and day out, we can become complacent and take shortcuts. When we become complacent and take shortcuts, we fail to follow the directions on the chemical label, and accidents occur. We must always be vigilant to avoid poisonings in the home, especially if children are in the home.

Statistics:

According to National Capital Poison Center, they provided guidance to nearly 2.1 million people for poison exposures.

Talking Points:

The below-talking points cover [tips on safely using chemicals at home](#).

- Read and understand the label. If you have questions, call the manufacturer's number. This number is usually found on the bottom of the label.
- Keep the poison control number close at hand. (800) 222-1222. Refer to the label.
- Use personal protective equipment (PPE). Refer to the label.
- Never assume more is better. Mix as directed. Refer to the label.
- Never put the chemical in other containers, especially milk or juice containers.
- Immediately wash hands after use. Refer to the label.
- Keep the area ventilated. Refer to the label.
- Keep all chemicals out of reach of children—properly secure all medicines, chemicals, and any other potentially harmful materials. Refer to the label.
- Never store poisons (chemicals) near food or where food is prepared. Refer to the label.
- Never mix chlorine bleach and ammonia. Refer to the label.
- Ensure heating systems are serviced as outlined in the manufacturer's recommendations. An improperly adjusted gas heating system could result in carbon monoxide poisoning.

Developed by:

- Never let your car idle in a closed garage to warm up. This causes a build-up of carbon monoxide.

Characteristics of potentially harmful substances used in the home include:

- Corrosive – Corrosives dissolve materials.
 - Flammable – Flammables have a low flash point and readily burn.
 - Reactive – Reactive chemicals may explode and may produce deadly vapors.
 - Toxic – Toxic chemicals are poisonous to living things.
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Final Thoughts:

Chemicals used in the home include medicines and any mixture of two or more substances. All chemicals are dangerous and have the ability to poison if directions on the label are not followed or if they fall into the wrong hands. As stressed in the talking points, labels are the most important tool you have in using chemicals safely. If you follow the above tips, you may avoid a serious incident in your home.

NOTE: Always promote discussion with the attendees. If a question comes up that no one in attendance can answer, please contact OWC or the Loss Control Innovations consultants for assistance.

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References:

[Poison Control National Capital Poison Center](#)

[Poison Statistics](#)

[EHS Today](#)

[Tips on using chemicals safely in the home and characteristics of household chemicals](#)