



## Safety Alert October 2020

### **Waste Process – Nitric Acid Near Miss.**

#### **Lessons Learnt**

*In a recent incident, a lab was disposing of material through the lab's documented waste process. An old bottle of nitric acid that appeared to be empty was uncapped and placed into the local waste stream. It was noticed that the bottle was fuming as it had a small amount of liquid (<5 mL) remaining in it. The bottle was removed from the waste bin and the cap was replaced, and then returned to the lab.*

*No injuries were sustained.*

#### **Actions after the incident was reported**

*The correct waste process was applied to the bottle for the amount of Nitric Acid found in the bottle. The bottle was made safe, chemical removed and disposed of correctly and the now empty bottle returned into the waste stream. The investigation identified that:*

- *Documented procedures were in place,*
- *Staff and students were trained in the correct handling and management of waste.*
- *Those completing the waste process skipped steps in the procedure – human error.*

#### **What are we doing differently now?**

- *Retraining of laboratory members to ensure they understand the importance of each stage of the waste process.*
- *Regular reviews of processes in labs need to be conducted by supervisors.*
- *A reminder to lab leads that oversight of laboratory work needs to occur and reviews conducted to ensure compliance to training is being met.*
- *A lesson learnt developed and distributed to the School and wider UNSW community.*

#### **Hazardous Material**

*Nitric acid is a hazardous substance and contact with the liquid could have resulted in a serious injury. When you are disposing of a hazardous substance, ensure that the waste stream used is appropriate. Refer to the Safety website for additional guidance located here [Documents and Resources](#).*

<b>Further Information:</b>	Corresponding author for this alert.
Contact your local Safety contact here:	<a href="mailto:t.kahwati@unsw.edu.au">t.kahwati@unsw.edu.au</a>
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