



August 2015

LAB SAFETY ALERT: WASTE CROSS-CONTAMINATION



A recent incident on campus has been traced to a chemical reaction between incompatible waste chemicals. After pouring 70% nitric acid into an empty Justrite waste container, a student detected a strong odor in the lab and found the waste container lid had popped open, emitting a brown fume. The lab was evacuated and after the odor dissipated, the waste container was moved to a fume hood and EHS

was contacted for disposal.

A subsequent investigation concluded that the waste container previously held a flammable organic material and residue from this chemical reacted with the nitric acid. The affected Department has since labeled its waste containers for exclusive use for acid, base, and flammable organic waste and has dedicated waste containers for nitric acid use only.

The University of Delaware does not allow labs to reuse chemical bottles for chemical waste in part because of the danger of cross contamination. Make sure you store your corrosive waste streams in a self-venting container to prevent gas build up. We also recommend dedicating waste containers to acid, base, and organic material to prevent accidental cross-contamination.

Please contact Brian Miani at 831-8475 if you have questions or require assistance regarding chemical usage and waste disposal.