

Check Your Flammable Storage Areas!

Health, Safety & Wellness recently found some improperly stored chemicals in the flammable cabinet of a lab and we wish to alert personnel to the possibility of this in other areas.

Oxidizers are a class of chemical that react chemically with other material in a way that increases the chance of a fire or explosion. This reaction may be spontaneous, and in some cases, can occur at room temperature. Thus, proper storage of oxidizers is important for preventing fires and explosions at the UofR.

Oxidizers can be identified by the WHMIS symbol: flame over circle.



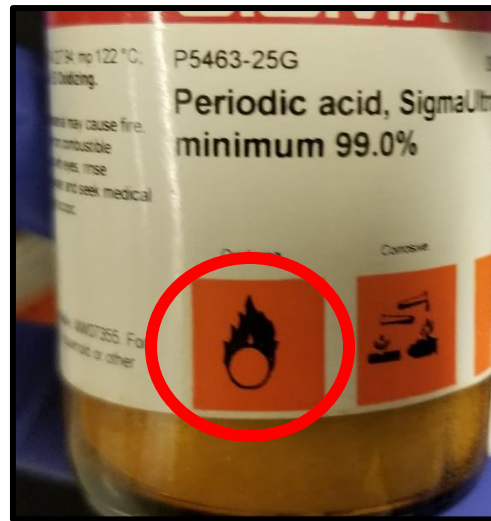
However, there is a strong similarity between the oxidizer symbol, and the symbol for flammable materials: flame.



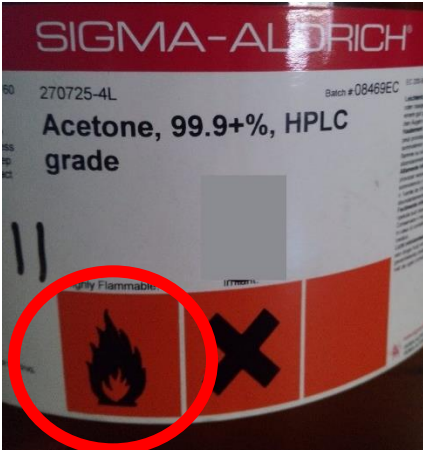
This is likely a contributing factor to the incorrect storage of these materials. A quick glance at a label may lead one to believe that these oxidizers are flammable, and prompt personnel to store them in the flammable cabinet. This is one of the worst places for these chemicals! If a leak or bottle breakage were to occur, a fire or explosion could easily result.

Another issue is that older bottles will not have the standardized WHMIS symbols that are now required. This means that it's even more likely to confuse different symbols, as there are multiple variations of each that you may encounter. In some cases, there may not even be a symbol present, and it may just be written out in a hazard description (see photos below).

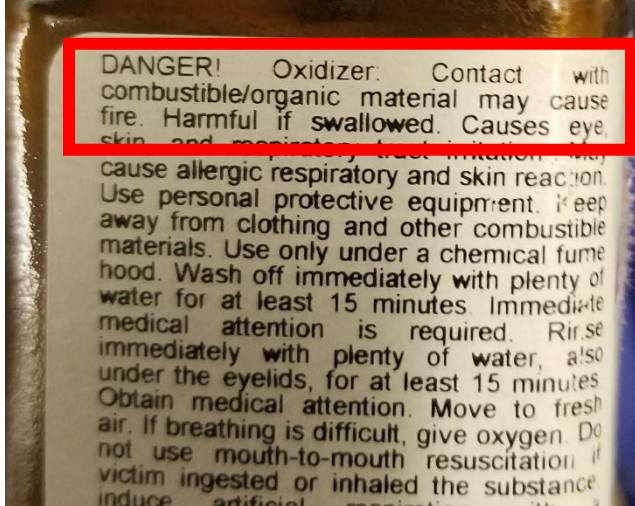
Please check your flammable cabinets to ensure that only flammable materials are stored there, and that oxidizers are stored separately from all other combustible materials. For example, they should not be placed on wooden shelves, or near paper, greases, waxes, etc. Some oxidizers are also incompatible with non-combustible materials and can undergo dangerous reactions. Check the Safety Data Sheet for all your chemicals to find out about these incompatibilities.



Older versions of the oxidizer symbol, before the new WHMIS standardization.



Older versions of the flammable symbol, before the new WHMIS standardization.



Bottle with no WHMIS symbols; hazards are written out on the label instead.

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