

## **Yellow Alert: Employee Inadvertently Put Bleach In Right Eye**

IDENTIFIER: Y-2004-OR-BJCPORTS-0601

DATE: June 29, 2004

### **LESSON LEARNED STATEMENT:**

When smaller secondary containers are to be used to transport hazardous materials, following secondary container requirements will prevent chemical exposure.

### **DISCUSSION OF ACTIVITIES:**

On Thursday, May 27, 2004 a subcontractor employee decided to bring in bleach from home to use in sanitizing the water reservoir of the 4th floor water dispenser, which is leased by the subcontractor. The employee used an empty saline solution bottle to put bleach in and bring to work. Before bringing the bottle to work he hand wrote the word "BLEACH" on it. The employee also brought an identical bottle of commercial brand saline solution to work for personal use. Each bottle was carried in different pockets. While at work, the employee decided to place some saline drops in his eyes, but did not think to check the label on the bottle. The employee inadvertently selected the bottle containing the bleach and placed some of the bleach into his right eye. The employee was able to immediately begin flushing his eye with water, so there was no injury to the eye.

### **ANALYSIS:**

On previous occasions, a cleaning product other than the product recommended by the water company was used to sanitize the water dispenser reservoirs. The product left a strong residual odor that was noticeable to personnel drinking from the water dispenser. When the next request was submitted to sanitize a dispenser, the employee decided to use the recommended product (liquid bleach). Since there was no bleach available on site, and only a small quantity was required to sanitize the reservoir (one tablespoon), the employee decided to bring in some bleach from a supply he had at home rather than go through the procurement process to obtain a larger-than-needed quantity of a hazardous chemical and then have to include it in the Hazardous Material Inventory. The employee frequently used saline solution drops for his eyes and happened to have an empty saline solution bottle that would hold the required amount of bleach and be easy to transport. The employee removed the dropper nipple from the bottle and put an ample quantity of bleach in the bottle. The employee was aware of the requirements for placing hazardous materials in secondary containers and marked the outside of the bottle "BLEACH" with an indelible marker. The bottle used to contain the bleach was identical to another saline solution bottle that the employee had in his other pocket. After sanitizing the water dispenser reservoir, the employee closed the bleach bottle and placed it in his pocket to take back home at the end of the day. Shortly after completing this task, the employee decided he needed to put

some saline drops in his eyes. The employee inadvertently removed the bottle containing bleach from his pocket, did not think to check the label, and placed some bleach in his right eye. The eye was immediately flushed. There was no injury to the eye.

**RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

Follow established requirements for procuring, labeling, storing, using, and disposing of bleach and other hazardous materials brought on site, including:

- Requesting and receiving approval to bring and use liquid bleach on site.
- Procuring a small container of liquid bleach for use to sanitize water dispensers. (Limiting the quantity procured to what is actually needed.)
- Ensuring the bleach is properly inventoried and stored.
- Obtaining the MSDS and communicating the hazards to potential users.
- Keeping hazardous chemicals in primary containers as much as possible. (Limiting the use of secondary containers.)
- Analyzing the shape and compatibility of secondary containers. Ensuring secondary containers cannot be mistaken for other commercial brand products.
- Labeling the secondary container properly (i.e., name of material and hazard), according to NFPA and the Hazardous Materials Identification Guide (HMIG) system.
- Maintaining control of all primary and secondary containers.
- Developing a cleaning process instruction that includes how and where to store the hazardous chemical.
- Issuing an approved AHA for the cleaning process. Knowing and use the required PPE.
- Properly disposing of unused quantities of hazardous chemicals and secondary containers.

**PRIORITY DESCRIPTOR:** Yellow/Caution

**FUNCTIONAL CATEGORY (S) (DOE):** Conduct of Operations; Occupational Safety & Health; Human Factors

**BJC TREND CODE (S) (USER-DEFINED):** OP - Conduct of Operations; SH -Occupational Safety & Health; HF - Human Factors

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KEYWORDS: bleach, chemicals, secondary container

REFERENCES: Occurrence Report ORO-BJC-PORTENVRES-2004-0010

HAZARDS: Other

WORK ACTIVITY: Material Storage

ISMS CODE: Perform Work Within Controls; Clear Roles & Responsibilities