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**Don't get bitten: ignorance is no longer a valid excuse.**

## DANGEROUS GOODS NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2013

**Happy New Year** and welcome to our first update of 2013. Whilst it has been relatively quiet over the Christmas and New Year break, the latest AIDGC Newsletter contains a number of relevant incidents that could be applicable to Australia.

**AIDGC newsletter:** [Click here](#)

A brief summary of international incidents include:

**CO2 Extinguishers Violent Discharge** – There have been a number of instances in the UK and Germany of violent discharges of polished aluminium CO2 extinguishers. In 2012 a 2kg extinguisher discharged violently in causing injury to a member of the public in a Virgin Bank in Norwich. This was a second recent incident where an extinguisher went off without being used or serviced. This followed a larger number of incidents in Germany over the preceding 18 months. A recall of CO2 extinguishers with brass valves stamped 231 (Europe) and 234 (UK). The AIDGC recommends that you inspect your CO2 extinguishers and are not those subscribed. If unsure, contact the manufacturer.

**Mercedes and VW Ban Honeywell/DuPont Coolant** – Field tests by Daimler-Benz have shown that a revolutionary refrigerant made by Honeywell and DuPont (HFO-1234yf) can explode on impact and release toxic gases in simulated crash conditions. Simulating a leak in the air conditioning of a Mercedes B-Class Tourer engineers released a fine mist of refrigerant and AC compressor oil across a running engine. The substance caught fire as soon as it came in contact with the hot engine releasing toxic corrosive gas as it burned. The cars windscreen turned milky white as lethal hydrogen fluoride began eating its way into the glass. Mercedes, VW and another 10 manufacturers have withdrawn the product from its manufacturing line.

**Toxic Scare from Yellow Fog over Buenos Aires** - A chemical container exploded in Buenos Aires, Argentina, blanketing the capital in a huge toxic cloud. Residents were told to stay inside while a mass evacuation from the area surrounding the blast was ordered. The container filled with pesticide caught on fire after a chemical reaction between its contents and exploded. As the flames were put out, yellow smoke billowed out of it. City officials believe the container may have been transporting garbage. "*The pesticide presents a low level of danger and affects the respiratory tract,*" said Sergio Berni, the national Security Secretary. The incident hit the city's Port Terminal 4 early in the morning. Several buildings in the port and the surrounding area were evacuated, according to Buenos Aires's Civil Defence. Residents in near-by areas were told to stay indoors, close their windows and turn off air conditioning. By 9:00am local time a strange heavy odour, described as similar to burnt oil or a gas leak, hit the city causing some metro lines and the city's domestic airport to suspend operations.

**It is recommended that the transport of any dangerous or hazardous material be undertaken using the correct and compliant transportation store. Sea containers are not compliant.**

**Hungary Toxic Mud Spill: Plant Managers on Trial:** The head of an alumina plant that caused a

massive toxic spill in western Hungary in 2010 recently went on trial along with 14 employees, accused of negligence. Ten people were killed and some 150 injured after a holding reservoir at the MAL alumina plant in Ajka burst its walls on October 4, 2010, sending 1.1 million cubic metres (38.8 million cubic feet) of poisonous red sludge into the surrounding area. The 15 accused, headed by MAL's managing director Zoltan Bakonyi, have been charged with negligence, waste management violations and damages to the environment. Witness hearings were held at the court in Veszprem, near the site of the disaster. It was unclear when a verdict was expected. MAL Hungarian Aluminium Production and Trade Company had already been ordered in September 2011 to pay 135 billion forints (€477 million, \$615 million) to the regional environmental authorities. It was however allowed to continue production, despite the spill, which officials have called Hungary's worst chemical disaster.



*We are please to present the following by Building Surveyor firm Hendry Pty Ltd in relation to Dangerous Goods Storage and Handling: Chemical Storage Audits. It was initially published on their web site ([www.hendry.com.au](http://www.hendry.com.au)) in December 2012.*

Work Place Safety Assessors advise that the Safety requirements under the new work health and safety (WHS) laws are broadly consistent with the previous legislation, but some changes may be needed in workplace systems and training, to meet obligations under the new laws. These new laws are based on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS).

This article addresses areas affected by the GHS, including classification, packaging, storage and handling, labelling, registers, control of risks and health monitoring.

### **Global Harmonized System**

Dangerous goods and hazardous substances have long been regulated separately, but the legislative frameworks for these two groups of chemicals have now been aligned into a single system to be used around the world. The GHS is a single internationally agreed system published by the United Nations, and chemical safety requirements under the new WHS laws are based on this system.

### **Main changes**

Legal requirements for hazardous substances and dangerous goods are now incorporated into a single set of rules for the use, handling and storage of workplace hazardous chemicals. They apply in New South Wales, Queensland, the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth, and will apply in Tasmania after 1 January 2013. In the other jurisdictions, chemical safety requirements under pre-model laws continue to apply. However, in organisations operating in jurisdictions where GHS-based chemical safety requirements are not likely to be implemented during 2013, understanding and using the GHS-based system will still be required because many products will inevitably be sourced from or sold in jurisdictions and countries using the GHS. The intention is for these rules to be adopted across Australia.

The main changes under the GHS-based laws are:

- The WHS laws regulate 'hazardous chemicals', including both hazardous substances and dangerous goods
- The primary duty holder is the 'person conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBU), a

broader category than 'employers'. No specific requirement for written risk assessments (though these may still be advisable)

### Changes in labelling

- 'Safety data sheets' (SDS) replace 'material safety data sheets' (MSDS)
- More substances require placarding.

Implications for workplaces organisations will have to arrange appropriate training in preparing or using the new labels and SDS. Workplace systems such as registers, placards, manifests and safety signs need to be reviewed and updated for compliance with the new laws.



### Dangerous Goods In The Workplace Survey

In February we will be undertaking a survey on the status of Dangerous Goods in the Workplace. This quick, 10 question survey, is designed to offer a snapshot of dangerous goods management trends, growth rates and issues regarding compliance. Once complete, we will produce the results in our March newsletter. We look forward to your input and participation.

**Workplace Check List:** [Click here](#)

We hope that this issue of our newsletter has been interesting and informative. Should you require information on storage and handling products please contact Joe Carrillo in NSW 02 9569 2122 or Glen Head in Qld 07 3245 3733 and Grant Breeze in Vic 03 9314 0444 or our web site [www.store-safe.com](http://www.store-safe.com)

Kind regards,

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