HAZARD ALERT

Subject: Laboratory Chemical Spill
Incident Date: November 10, 2016

Incident Summary
A worker was decanting 10% neutral buffered formalin from a “cube” container (see image) into specimen jars. The container was located on a shelf at about eye level for the worker. As the worker was decanting the fluid, the spigot broke and the formalin began to spill onto both the worker and floor. The worker covered the opening with their gloved hand, and with the help of another worker, they were able to get the container into an upright position to stop further spillage.

The fume hood emergency purge button was pressed and the lab was evacuated for about ninety minutes to allow the odour to dissipate. Upon return, the spill was cleaned up using the University of Calgary spill kit.

Injuries and Equipment Damage
The contaminated worker proceeded to the washroom to remove some of the formalin and then proceeded to drive home alone to change out of their wet clothing. Upon returning to work, the worker was advised to go to the hospital to be assessed. There was no injury to the worker.

Immediate and root cause(s):
1. Equipment was not inspected prior to use.
2. Materials were not placed at an appropriate height for all workers.
3. Emergency shower was not used during the emergency.
4. Spill response training was not completed.

Corrective Actions:
1. Ensure workers inspect materials and equipment for any damage prior to use. Common practice is to use a spigot when turning a cube or moving a cube, this might have deteriorated the spigot’s integrity. An inspection prior to using the spigot could have identified the damage.

2. Ensure regularly used materials and equipment are placed at a comfortable height for everyone working in the lab.

3. Ensure that workers are aware of the location of, and are trained in the proper use of emergency eyewashes and showers and document such training.

4. Ensure all workers have completed the required safety training identified in the lab Hazard Assessment and Control Form.

References:
- Lab Safety Program – Spill Response Training; Spill Response Procedures