

Safety Alert

FUMES & ODOURS

Issue Date: 17 June 2019

Context:

RMIT Property Services have noted an increase in incidents and hazards relating to fumes and odours.

Products such as paints, adhesives and sealants, may be toxic and/or have very high odours. If not handled correctly, this can have a negative health effect on workers, as well as impacting air quality for RMIT staff, students, contractors and visitors.

Such occurrences have the potential to cause health risk and to adversely impacted RMIT operations.

Hazard:

- ☒ Choosing paint, adhesives or sealants with high Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) content
- ☒ Negative impact to indoor air quality, of occupied or unoccupied spaces
- ☒ Not considering the potential effect on RMIT Operations and adjacent spaces/occupants
- ☒ Not using a material or substance in accordance with the manufacturer and Safety Data Sheet (SDS) instructions
- ☒ SDSs are not reviewed or kept on site
- ☒ Materials stored, transported, or disposed incorrectly
- ☒ Materials or substances are used in areas without sufficient ventilation.



Actions Required:

- ☒ When choosing a product, such as paint, adhesives or sealants, choose water based substances that are no or low VOCs content
- ☒ Use these substances away RMIT air intakes, vents or open windows to ensure no fumes enter the building
- ☒ Consider doing these tasks after hours to reduce impact to RMIT operations
- ☒ Low VOC emissions are considered to be those with a VOC content <50g/L
- ☒ Generally only products with no, or low VOC emissions are to be used on RMIT sites (both interior and exterior applications), where an alternate is recommended seek authorisation from RMIT prior to use
- ☒ Ensure adequate ventilation is provided when using products containing any level of VOC
- ☒ SDS to be reviewed and understood by all work parties, specifically 'Section 2: Hazards Identification'. Look out for materials that include the following:
 - **Hazard Codes: H319, H331, H332, H334, H335, H336, H350;** and
 - **Precautionary Codes: P261, P271, P285, P304 & P341**
- ☒ Safety Data Sheet (SDS) to be available on-site during all works
- ☒ Ensure chemical labels are clear and followed.
- ☒ Ensure appropriate response in the event of a spill (refer to Section 6 of the SDS)

Further guidance on Health, Safety and Environment requirements for works undertaken by Property Services can be found here; <https://www.rmit.edu.au/about/our-locations-and-facilities/facilities/property-contractor-management>

