Chemicals are purchased in containers called primary containers. Containers such as pots, drums, plastic jugs, spray bottles, etc. used to store and/or transport smaller quantities of these same chemicals are called secondary containers.

Generally, we must make sure that each secondary container of hazardous chemical(s) in the workplace is labeled, tagged or marked with at least the following information:

- Identity of the hazardous chemical(s) in the container.
- Ensure hazard warnings, words, pictures, and/or symbols, which provide at least general information regarding the hazards of the chemicals, and which, in conjunction with the other information (an MSDS) will provide employees with the specific information regarding the physical and health hazards of the hazardous chemical.

Here's an example of an alternative labeling system designed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) that uses color, numbers and other information to convey the hazards of the chemical.

Portables containers used to transfer hazardous chemicals from labeled containers, and are intended only for the immediate use of the employee who performs the transfer are not required to be labeled. It's important to know that portable containers must be under the positive control of the employee using it. Let's say an employee is cleaning some parts with solvent he has placed in an unmarked container. As long as he is using it for immediate use and can prevent another employee from exposure, labeling is not required. However, if he walks away from the workstation to go on a break (or for any reason), losing control of the chemical, the status of the container changes. Unattended containers must be labeled.

Labels are useless unless they accurately communicate the hazards of their associated chemicals. It's important to keep labels in good condition at all times. Existing labels on incoming containers of hazardous chemicals must not be removed or defaced, unless the container is immediately marked with the required information.

We must ensure that labels or other forms of warning are:

- Legible, in English,
- Prominently displayed on the container, or
- Readily available in the work area throughout each work shift

DO NOT MIX MATERIALS & LABELS - LABELS MUST ACCURATELY REFLECT THE MATERIALS WITHIN