



SHARP START



DECEMBER 10 — Mark Every Chemical Container

A water bottle sat on the bench — filled with paint thinner. That's how close calls begin: not with malice, but with habit blindness (“it’s just a container”) and cognitive drift (“I’ll label it later”). But a familiar shape can hide a deadly surprise.

A bottle clear with poison near,
Is danger dressed in friendly gear.
Label well and store with care
So no one’s caught unaware.

Putting chemicals in a water bottle is like storing bleach in an empty Gatorade bottle — someone’s going to grab it thirsty, and that story ends in the ER. Have you ever taken a drink from a can that someone used as an ashtray. Not the aftertaste you are hoping for.

Hazards

- Accidental ingestion
- Skin/eye exposure
- Fume exposure
- HazCom violation

Stats

- **25–30%** of ingestion injuries come from unlabeled containers
- **35%** of chemical injuries involve labeling errors

Words of Wisdom

Every chemical must be in a proper, labeled container.

If you can drink it, somebody might. Don’t tempt fate.

Pause and Think

Cognitive drift is when your mind slowly slides away from the task without you noticing. Instead of focusing on what your hands, tools, or surroundings are doing, your brain starts replaying conversations, planning the weekend, or worrying about home. When cognitive drift sets in, hazards disappear from your awareness—your eyes may be open, but your mind isn’t on the job—and that’s when small mistakes turn into big injuries. You have to recognize it and reset so you are back in the moment.

- Have you ever mistaken one container for another?
- What’s the weirdest thing you’ve seen stored in the wrong bottle?
- What do you do when you notice you have drifted into another thought?