



Sustainability at Oakwood Products

Lessons Learned, Best Practices & Individual Impact
Tiffany Hiers

Speaker Intro



My name is Tiffany Hiers. I am the Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) manager with nine years of experience at Oakwood Products. I began my career as a prepacker and worked my way into my current role, gaining valuable hands-on operational experience along the way. I am very passionate about promoting safe work practices while supporting sustainability and continuous improvement in daily operations.

I am originally from Early Branch, South Carolina, I enjoys spending time with my boys, staying active through sports, and caring for my animals—including four dogs, nine ducks, and two goats.

Sustainability in Our Work



SAFE CHEMICAL HANDLING
AND STORAGE



WASTE MINIMIZATION



BECAME MORE AWARE OF
HOW DAILY LAB TASKS
IMPACT WASTE AND
SAFETY



MORE PROACTIVE IN
REPORTING HAZARDS AND
IMPROVING PROCESSES



COMMITTED TO
CONTINUOUS LEARNING IN
SAFETY AND
SUSTAINABILITY



COMPLIANCE WITH EPA,
OSHA, AND COMPANY
SOPS



Lessons Learned



Small mistakes in labeling or storage can create major safety and compliance risks



Proper segregation of chemicals prevents dangerous reactions and disposal issues



Staying organized improves both safety and efficiency



Early hazard reporting prevents incidents



Training gaps lead to inconsistent practices

Best Practices

Store flammables in proper cabinets or outdoor containers

Early hazard identification prevents incidents before they escalate

Near-miss reporting is just as important as reporting actual incidents

PPE only works when it's used consistently and correctly

Follow SOPs for all lab and production tasks



Continuous Improvement



Process Improvements

- Improve chemical inventory tracking to prevent expired materials

Waste Reduction

- Monitor accumulation areas more closely to avoid overfilling
- Overfilling Drums: once a drum is full, we tighten the opening and put red duct tape over the top to prevent overfilling.

Safety & Compliance Enhancements

- Regularly review and update SOPs

Training & Engagement

- Encourage employees to report improvement ideas
- Reinforce accountability at all levels

Individual Sustainability



Daily Work Habits

Properly label all chemicals to prevent waste and compliance issues

Follow SOPs to ensure safe and consistent processes

Keep work areas clean and organized to prevent hazards



Waste & Environmental Responsibility

Dispose of chemicals correctly in designated accumulation areas

Segregate waste properly

Monitor container levels and avoid overfilling



Safety & Accountability

Always wear appropriate PPE

Report hazards, near misses, or unsafe conditions immediately

Double-check storage requirements (flammables, temperature-controlled items)

Take responsibility for safe handling of materials



Proactive Mindset

Speak up with ideas for safer

Stay up to date with training and procedures



“One of the biggest lessons I’ve learned is that sustainability and safety really come down to consistency in the small things—like labeling, storage, and following procedures. Those small actions add up to a big impact over time.”

Real Daily Impact

Using correct container sizes reduces excess waste
(Example: adjusting bottle size based on material volume and properties)

Double-checking labels prevents disposal and compliance errors

Keeping work areas clean improves safety and efficiency

Proper storage prevents chemical degradation and waste

Challenges



Operational Challenges

Time pressure can lead to shortcuts or missed steps



Safety & Compliance Challenges

Ensuring consistent labeling and storage across all team members

Managing hazardous materials safely while maintaining efficiency

Keeping up with changing regulations (EPA, OSHA, etc.)



Waste & Sustainability Challenges

Managing waste accumulation areas effectively



People & Training Challenges

Inconsistent training or experience levels across employees

Encouraging employees to speak up or suggest improvements

Recommendations



Container Standardization

Problem : Wrong container sizes
= waste inefficiency

Recommendation: Create simple guidelines for container selection (based on density, volume, material type)

Encourage employees to verify container choices when needed



Label Verification Process

Problem: Label errors → disposal issues / compliance risk

Recommendation: Implement a quick “double-check” step before storage or disposal

Standardize labeling format across all labs



Employee Empowerment

Problem: People don't always speak up

Recommendation: Encourage employees to question processes safely

Promote a culture where suggestions are valued

Conclusion

- Sustainability is driven by daily decisions, not just large initiatives
- Small actions—like proper labeling, storage, and material use—create a big impact
- Continuous improvement depends on consistency, communication, and accountability
- Everyone plays a role in building a safer and more sustainable workplace
- Oakwood is well-positioned to continue improving through these efforts

In conclusion, sustainability isn't just about big changes—it's about the small, consistent actions we take every day. From choosing the right container sizes to properly labeling and storing materials, those decisions add up. I've learned that when we focus on accountability, communication, and continuous improvement, we can make a real impact on both safety and sustainability. And ultimately, it's something every one of us contributes to.

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Questions

Any questions or suggestions?