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Use of lead in ACT schools

Posted by Anonymous on Thu, 2016-09-08 11:14

Use of lead in ACT schools: From reading answers to another question, it's my understanding that lead is banned in some Australian jurisdictions, and approved or restricted in others.

Can anyone tell me if lead (solid, lead shot, salts) is allowed to be used in Years 7 to 10 in ACT class rooms? Or where exactly I go to find this out?

Voting:



No votes yet

Year Level:

7
8
9
10

Laboratory Technicians:

Laboratory Technicians

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Use of lead in ACT schools

Submitted by sat on 16 September 2016

Variation in school policies: You are correct that there are significant variations between the practices and local policies of the states and territories and educational jurisdictions with regard to chemicals used in school science. We understand that there are no formal lists of chemicals to be used or banned in ACT schools and that schools are directed to consider information from a chemical's Safety Data Sheet (SDS) or other advisory information to make judgements and decisions on the suitability of staff/students handling particular chemicals.

Chemicals in science: In order to remove the duplication and variation that exists, Science ASSIST has developed a [List of recommended chemicals for science in Australian schools](#). The list is not intended to supersede the advice of the educational jurisdictions; schools are subject to the policies and directives of their educational jurisdiction with regard to the use of chemicals in science. It is therefore important that schools consult their school governing body to determine the policies and procedures that they are required to follow with regard to chemical use. Some school jurisdictions have set policies and some sectors allow this to be a school based decision. In the absence of any specific formal directives, schools should conduct their own site specific risk assessment and could consider adopting the [List of recommended chemicals for science in Australian schools](#).

Use of lead: When Science ASSIST did a comparison between different jurisdictions, lead metal was permitted in all jurisdictions although it was noted as being a high risk substance in Queensland¹. There was much variation between jurisdictions regarding the use of lead salts, from being approved, restricted to year 11 and 12 through to being banned. Science ASSIST considers that although there are health hazards associated with lead, by implementing appropriate controls such as restricting the number of lead-containing substances used in science and ensuring safe handling procedures, the risks can be safely managed within the school setting.

Lead-containing substances: We have included only three lead-containing substances: lead metal, lead nitrate (in solution for students) and lead (II) oxide. These are included because we consider that they allow for some worthwhile demonstrations and activities and that their associated hazards can be reduced to an acceptable level with safe practices. It is recommended that any reactions using lead or its compounds be conducted on a conservative scale and that other materials be substituted for lead where possible (e.g. using lead-free solder in electronics).

Safe procedures: for handling solutions would include using small quantities for short amounts of time, wearing appropriate PPE such as gloves and safety glasses as well as good laboratory hygiene such as cleaning up any spills, no eating or drinking in laboratories and washing hands at the end of all laboratory sessions. When making up solutions from the solid chemicals the additional control of conducting this in an operating fume cupboard should be used. Schools may prefer to purchase some chemicals in solution form, rather than prepare the solution on site.

Here are some links to previous questions that we have answered:

[Lead and lead salts](#) contains an explanation regarding the suitability and reasoning for the applications of lead and selection of lead salts in school science activities

Use of chemicals contains safe handling considerations for lead nitrate and phenolphthalein

Links to School sectors in the ACT:

ACT Government Education Directorate home page. ACT Government Education Directorate website, <https://www.education.act.gov.au/> (Accessed September 2016)

Catholic Education Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn home page, Catholic Education Office Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn website, <https://cg.catholic.edu.au/> (Accessed September 2016)

The Association of Independent Schools of the ACT homepage, AISACT website, <http://ais.act.edu.au/> (Accessed September 2016)

Reference

¹Queensland Department of Education. 2020, *Guideline for Managing Risks with Chemicals in DoE Workplaces*. Queensland DoE website. <https://education.qld.gov.au/initiativesstrategies/Documents/guideline-managing-chemicals.pdf> (Link updated May 2020)

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