

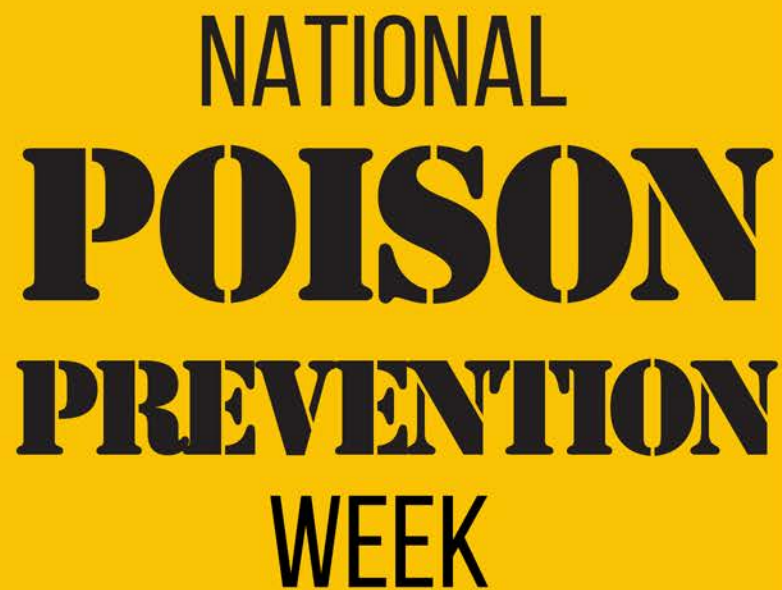
**SAFETY  
MATTERS**  
RISK  
MANAGEMENT  
NEWSLETTER**IN THIS ISSUE****MARCH 21, 2025**

- Understanding the Risks: What's Poisonous?
- Signs and Symptoms of Poisoning
- Emergency Procedures
- Implementing Safety Measures
- Creating a Culture of Safety

## NATIONAL POISON PREVENTION WEEK

**OBJECTIVE** Each year, more than 2 million poisonings are reported to the nation's poison control centers. National Poison Prevention Week (NPPW) serves as an important opportunity to engage K-12 school districts and community colleges in raising awareness about the risks of poisoning and promoting preventive measures within our communities. Held each year in the third week of March, this week-long initiative aims to educate the public on the various hazards that can lead to poisoning. As a collective effort, we can take meaningful steps to protect students, staff, and the broader educational community from preventable poisonings.

Poison prevention is a crucial concern for all educational institutions, whether they are K-12 schools or community colleges. The risks of poisoning go beyond household settings and can be prevalent in school classrooms, cafeterias, laboratories, and recreational spaces. Cleaning products, pesticides, food allergens, medications, and even common plants can all pose dangers to students, staff, and visitors if not properly managed.



**NATIONAL  
POISON  
PREVENTION  
WEEK**



## UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS - WHAT'S POISONOUS?

Poisoning risks are more common than many realize and can be found in a variety of everyday items used across campus. Many household products, cleaning supplies, medications, and even cosmetics pose a threat if not handled properly.

Common poisoning risks include:

- **Cleaning Supplies and Chemicals:** Common cleaning agents, disinfectants, and pesticides used in schools and colleges can be toxic if misused or improperly stored.
- **Medications:** Prescription medications, over-the-counter drugs, and even common supplements can be dangerous if taken incorrectly or ingested by someone they were not intended for.
- **Cosmetics and Personal Care Products:** Items such as lotions, makeup, hand sanitizers, and perfumes can be toxic if consumed or used incorrectly.
- **Laboratory Chemicals:** In science labs or other academic settings, exposure to hazardous chemicals or fumes is a constant concern, especially if safety protocols are not followed.
- **Plants:** Certain indoor and outdoor plants commonly found on campuses can be poisonous when ingested.
- **Tobacco and Alcohol:** While typically not a concern in classrooms, tobacco products and alcohol may still pose a risk, particularly in college settings.

By staying aware of potential dangers in our environment, we can proactively prevent accidents and respond quickly and effectively when incidents do occur.



## SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF POISONING

Quickly identifying the symptoms of poisoning is essential to minimizing harm. Although symptoms can vary based on the type of poisoning, there are several common signs to be aware of:

- **Physical Symptoms:** Nausea, vomiting, stomach pain, or diarrhea
- **Breathing Difficulties:** Difficulty breathing or swallowing
- **Mental or Behavioral Changes:** Confusion, dizziness, or lethargy
- **Skin Reactions:** Burns, redness, or irritation around the mouth or skin
- **Visible Symptoms:** Unusual or erratic behavior, or the presence of chemicals in or around a person's mouth







## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES: STEPS TO TAKE IN THE EVENT OF POISONING**

Despite our best efforts, poisoning accidents can still happen. In these situations, it's essential to act quickly and efficiently to minimize harm. Every school and community college should have a clear emergency response protocol that includes immediate steps to take in the event of a poisoning.

1. **Assess the Situation:** Determine the substance involved and the severity of the exposure. Check if the individual is conscious, breathing, and alert.
2. **Call Poison Control:** Immediately contact the Poison Help Hotline at 1-800-222-1222 for expert advice on what to do next. They can provide instructions based on the type of poisoning and guide you through the emergency response.
3. **Provide First Aid:** First-aid kits should be readily available in key areas, especially in classrooms, science labs, kitchens, and maintenance areas. Staff members should be trained in basic first-aid procedures, including how to manage minor poisoning incidents or stabilize someone until professional help arrives.
4. **Seek Medical Help:** If the individual is unconscious, having difficulty breathing, or showing signs of severe poisoning (such as seizures), call 911 immediately. Follow the instructions given by the Poison Control Center or emergency services.

## **IMPLEMENTING SAFETY MEASURES**

To reduce the risk of poisoning on campus, it's crucial to establish and follow safety measures across all areas of the school or community college.

This includes proper handling, storage, and disposal of potentially hazardous substances, as well as educating students, staff, and faculty about the importance of safety.

- **Proper Storage and Compatible Storage of Chemicals:** All chemicals, cleaning supplies, and hazardous materials should be stored securely in locked, labeled cabinets, out of reach of students and unauthorized personnel. It's essential to store chemicals in compatible groupings, as certain chemicals may react dangerously when mixed. For example, cleaning agents containing bleach should not be stored near products containing ammonia, as they can produce toxic fumes. Proper segregation of chemicals according to their types and properties (e.g., acids, bases, flammable materials) is vital to prevent accidents. Furthermore, substances should always be labeled with clear instructions and safety warnings to ensure proper handling and identification.
- **Clear Labeling:** Ensure that all hazardous substances are clearly labeled with detailed instructions and potential risks. This includes labeling food-grade products or chemicals that could be misused by students, ensuring that they are identified as hazardous when necessary.







- **Proper Disposal:** Establish proper procedures for the disposal of hazardous materials and chemicals, following local, state, and federal regulations. Ensure that materials are disposed of in designated areas or through authorized hazardous waste collection services. This may include the collection of unused or expired chemicals and materials that could pose a risk. Regularly audit and update these procedures to ensure compliance with regulations and safe practices.
- **Protective Equipment:** When handling chemicals or other hazardous materials, appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, goggles, and masks should be worn. This is particularly important in maintenance areas, laboratories, and janitorial operations.
- **Supervision in High-Risk Areas:** Key areas such as science labs, kitchens, and outdoor recreational spaces should have clear guidelines for supervision. Ensuring that there is adequate adult supervisors present in areas where hazardous substances may be present can significantly reduce the likelihood of poisoning incidents.
- **Safety Education and Training:** Staff members should receive training on how to recognize and respond to poisoning risks. This can include formal or tailgate trainings for maintenance and janitorial staff on safely handling chemicals and more general awareness programs for all campus members about the risks of toxic substances. Students can also be educated on poison prevention through health and science curricula, so they are aware of common dangers and know what to do in case of exposure.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Ensure all educational institutions have a clear, well-communicated emergency plan for handling poisoning incidents. This plan should include access to the **Poison Control Hotline (1-800-222-1222)**, clear steps for emergency medical assistance, and proper first aid measures. It's also crucial that all staff members are trained in responding to poisoning emergencies.

## A Shared Responsibility for Safety

Poisoning risks are present in many everyday items, but by recognizing these hazards and taking appropriate preventative measures, we can help keep schools and community colleges safe. If a poisoning emergency arises, don't hesitate to call the **Poison Help Hotline at 1-800-222-1222** for immediate support. Together, we can keep our campus safe and ensure that poison prevention remains a priority every day.

## RESOURCES

**Poison Control Center: Poison Control Hotline (1-800-222-1222) or [get help online](#) is available 24/7.**

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):**

[www.cdc.gov/poisoning](http://www.cdc.gov/poisoning).

**National Capital Poison Center: [www.poison.org](http://www.poison.org)**

*This California Schools JPA fact sheet is not intended to be exhaustive. The discussion and best practices suggested herein should not be regarded as legal advice. Readers should pursue legal counsel or contact their insurance providers to gain more exhaustive advice.*





# SIGN-IN SHEET

## NATIONAL POISON PREVENTION WEEK

Facilitator: \_\_\_\_\_ Facilitator's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Organization: \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_

### Participants:

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