HAZARD ALERT

RISK MANAGEMENT SECTION

Department of Environment and Conservation

Date: July 2012 **Alert No: 23**

Source:
Internal ☒ External ☐

Author: Pollution Response

Identified Hazard:
Risk Rating: Low ☐ Moderate ☐ High ☐ Significant ☒

Nature of Incident: Injury Property Damage Near-hit ☐

Other:

Description of Incident:

Employees came across some bottles of old concentrated nitric, sulphuric and picric acid in the forest and took them back to the office in a container in the back of a utility. The bottles were subsequently deemed unstable and blown up by the Police Bomb Squad.

***Incident Time and Date*:**

11 July 2012

Equipment Involved:

Bottles of nitric and picric acid found in the bush

Picric acid is the chemical compound formally called 2,4,6-trinitrophenol (TNP). It is especially hazardous because it is volatile and slowly sublimes even at room temperature. Over time, the buildup of picrates on exposed metal surfaces can constitute a grave hazard.

Like other highly nitrated compounds such as TNT, picric acid is an explosive. Dry picric acid (picrates) is relatively sensitive to shock and friction and can explode. The picrate crystals are bright yellow to yellow orange in colour and commonly found crystalised outside the bottle just below the bottle cap.

Bomb disposal units are often called to dispose of picric acid if it has dried out.

Recommendations:

- If you come across this type of unknown substance, the appropriate procedure is to make the site secure, **DONT TOUCH OR SHAKE THE BOTTLE** and seek advice from DEC's Pollution Response Unit 1300 784 782 or 0400 866 44

- Provide as much information as possible about the unknown substance colour, size of bottles any markings, words, where it is found etc.

Produced by Risk Management Section