This plan is enacted when a **CHEMICAL/HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCE EMERGENCY** is declared, and the level of risk to personal safety, property or environment is an immediate risk to escalate. This plan relates to the response of staff and students to a critical incident and supports the Emergency Management Plan (EMP) that exists for the individual buildings.

Small spills of relatively innocuous substances can be dealt with on a regular basis by the staff of UNE. Spill kits, eye wash stations and deluge showers are only the equivalent of a fire extinguisher; a ‘first aid’ measure. Fire and Rescue (the primary HAZMAT combat agency) must be called to deal with a large unintentional release of a hazardous substance.

Within departments, bulk chemicals are stored in secure hazardous substance stores and distributed in smaller quantities to laboratories. Within individual labs and buildings however, the potential for a release that could be fatal or incapacitate several people within minutes, does exist. Evacuation initiated by those in the immediate area is the only effective first response. After that, issues arise in dealing with displaced people, those suffering from the effects of brief exposure, and the disruption caused by a significant emergency services response.

Note: In most instances, Departments using hazardous substances have fully qualified technical/specialised staff who have key knowledge and ability and must be consulted over any incident. This includes the specialist building chemicals expert, members of the Hazardous Substances Safety Group, Bio Safety Group and the Radiation Safety Group.

**Immediate Actions:**

Protect your own life

In the absence of any direction from the University, use your best judgement to remove yourself from danger.

Protect the life of your fellow student or staff member

Ring ‘000’ and Safety and Security 6773 2099.

Alert others in your immediate area to the danger, and act together for the benefit of everyone. Try to identify the safest escape route.

Evacuate

Evacuate areas affected N.B. anyone sent to assist with evacuation must not enter an area where they can be affected by the release of the chemical substance.

**Evacuate if:**

* Vapours/gas present a risk of explosion.
* Fumes, gas, vapours would take a long time to clear from the area.
* The building cannot be tightly closed. Do not activate the fire alarm if gas vapour is present (risk of explosion).

**Move people:**

* Upwind, Uphill.
* Move people only as far as necessary for safety – they may transfer contamination.
* Accommodate those held where medical help can reach them quickly and ambulance (stretcher) access is easy.
* Control and hold all those exposed or potentially exposed (they will need to be briefed and their details recorded in case of delayed effects).

**Protect in place if:**

* There is not enough time to evacuate before the hazard affects the area.
* The incident and hazard are likely to be of short duration (approximately one hour).
* There is concern for contamination.

**Supplementing medical response:**

* If more than 10 people are affected and require medical help, emergency services may initially have difficulty in providing that assistance.
* Use surrounding building 1st aid responders to assist.
* Provide an area for medical treatment that:
  1. has water and washing facilities;
  2. can be cordoned off;
  3. has separate entrances and exits; and
  4. Can easily be reached by ambulance staff with a stretcher.

**Collect all information about the substance and incident (if safe to do so):**

* Locate the chemical specialist for the building affected
* Chemwatch has all chemicals and volumes for each building along with Safety Data Sheets.
* Gather specific information like;
  1. proper (technical) name;
  2. shipping or trade name;
  3. UN number;
  4. dangerous goods class (number);
  5. phase (solid, liquid, gas);
  6. quantity;
  7. colour;
  8. behaviour (e.g. fuming, reacting with water or air);
  9. type of container;
  10. effect on people (symptoms of exposure);

Isolate the hazard

* Restrict unnecessary movement into and through the area to avoid spreading contamination. Isolate the affected area at a safe distance by erecting a temporary barricade and placing suitable warning signs.
* It may be necessary to turn off the air conditioning to restrict the spread of gases and vapours.