

The new University Chemical Stores began operation on July 1, 2018 and now reports to the Office of Compliance, Integrity, and Safety. With the commissioning of the new facility, all chemicals and reagents for research and teaching must be purchased by, and delivered to, the University Chemical Stores. Expanding the existing Chemical Stores, previously maintained by the Department of Chemistry, into the larger University Chemical Stores will increase safety, reduce the cost of managing chemicals and reagents, reduce disposal costs, and provide a high level of customer service, including in-laboratory delivery. The website for the new Chemical Stores is www.mtu.edu/chemstores

Safety – MIOSHA and many research sponsors require the university to maintain an inventory of all chemicals and reagents and maintain readily accessible Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for each chemical and reagent. Knowing what material is stored in each laboratory is paramount for maintaining a safe work environment and in the case of an emergency, it is imperative to know the nature of the materials stored in each laboratory before entering. With central procurement through the University Chemical Stores, all chemicals coming on campus will be inventoried and their final destination will be documented. This will be facilitated by in-laboratory delivery to the final destination. Direct delivery to the laboratory also means that potentially hazardous materials will not be left sitting in departmental offices, sometimes under improper storage conditions, presenting a potential risk to those in the office. Further, University Chemical Stores' personnel will enter each chemical and reagent name, and its location, into MSDSONline.

Cost Reduction – There will be no price “mark-up” of chemicals and reagents. The purchaser will pay the same price University Chemical Stores pays for the chemical or reagent, including shipping and handling charges imposed by the vendor. The University Chemical Stores will also maintain all blanket orders the current Chemical Stores has in place with over 20 vendors and they will maintain the online ordering arrangements they have in place with over 30 vendors. As needs are identified, new blanket orders will be put in place as well as expanding the provider list to meet the requirements of university researchers and educators. When possible, orders to the same vendor will be consolidated to defray or eliminate shipping costs. Of course, RUSH orders will be processed immediately, but shipping costs will be commensurately higher, as they are now when ordered directly. By centralizing the university-wide purchasing of chemicals and reagents, economies of scale will be realized, reducing per unit costs. Additionally, by placing larger orders, shipping costs can be reduced and in many cases, shipping costs will be eliminated (i.e., free shipping). Through the central ordering process, the practice of over-buying (i.e., buying more than is needed to get a better price, or reduced shipping costs) will be eliminated and in-laboratory stockpiles of chemicals, which now occurs, will be curtailed. This will result in a reduction of stockpiles and much lower disposal cost when the material is no longer of use.

Purchaser-Centered Procurement – The University Chemical Stores will maintain any blanket order required, and will use online ordering methods whenever possible, which is currently the case for the vast majority of vendors. The University Chemical Stores is the only entity on campus allowed to procure chemicals and reagents using a P-card, thereby greatly facilitating online purchasing and same-day ordering when required by the purchaser. Once the order is placed, the purchaser will receive by email a copy of all correspondence from the vendor including orders received, orders processed, items backordered, and expected delivery date.

Customer Service – It is clear that a centralized procurement system requires attention to customer service and the new facility is being designed and staffed to provide the needed level of

service. Ample storage facilities have been constructed including a flammable-material refrigerator, a -20° and an -80° freezer, and temporary storage space for materials with special handling needs. Personnel in the University Chemical Stores will inspect packages upon receipt and reject those damaged in shipping, greatly speeding up the replacement process. Most importantly, starting September 1, 2018, the University Chemical Stores will provide delivery directly to the laboratory where the chemical or reagent is to be stored. The exact delivery schedule will be worked out as the service comes on-line. It is intended for RUSH orders to be delivered upon receipt and other orders to be delivered on a regular schedule. Orders will not be delivered to departmental offices or empty labs so safety can be maintained and the purchaser will know exactly when the item has been delivered. Also as previously mentioned, the researcher or departmental staff will no longer have the burden of entering the material into MSDSonline. The University Chemical Stores will maintain a walk-up window so those desiring to pick-up their own supplies will still be able to do so.

The new facility will be customer-focused and will be responsive to all requests. However, this change in chemical and reagent purchasing will lead to some changes in existing processes. First, starting July 1, departmental blanket orders for chemicals will no longer be allowed. All chemicals and reagents shall be purchased through the University Chemical Stores. This leads to the question of “What is a chemical?” In the vast majority of cases, this is not an issue as the material in question is, no doubt, a chemical or a reagent. However, there will be some purchases that may not be obvious. When there is any doubt, the purchaser simply needs to contact the University Chemical Stores and ask. Departments and individuals will still be able to order non-chemicals and reagents directly.

Overall, the new University Chemical Stores is a positive step forward on many fronts. The facility will have some start-up issues, for sure, and your patience is greatly appreciated. The staff at the new facility will seek the university communities input and will adjust accordingly to meet the goals of a safer, lower cost, customer friendly facility that will provide needed support for researchers and educators. Your patience in this time of transition is greatly appreciated.