

University of Michigan Places Restrictions on Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizer Due to Flammability | Bob McCarty Writes

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If other colleges and universities across the country choose to follow the University of Michigan's lead, a recent decision by officials at the Ann Arbor school could put a huge dent in the bottom lines of several companies in the \$100-million hand sanitizer industry. It could also make centers of higher education across the country more safe.



Based largely on a state fire marshal's bulletin limiting where alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers can be placed because of concerns about the product's flammability, University of Michigan officials recently placed restrictions on the use and placement of those dispensers on campus.

According to Richard Fitzgerald, a spokesperson for the 40,000-students-strong university, an [Aug. 20 memo](#) went out to various departments across the school's 3,000-plus-acre campuses outlining the new restrictions. Among the factors influencing the decision to limit the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizer products on campus were the following:

- **Alcohol-based hand sanitizers are classified as a Class I Flammable Liquid. Therefore we cannot recommend their use in non-healthcare facilities;**
- **When considering the use of alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR), facility representatives shall consider the potential misuse of the product, the potential hazard due to the facility occupancy, past history of fires and other circumstances;**
- **Dispensers containing this product should not be located in a required corridor or exit, or any area open to a required corridor or exit;**
- **This product must be isolated from high temperatures and possible ignition sources such as, but not limited to, open-flame, electrical equipment, switches or receptacles; and**
- **The storage of quantities (10 gallons or more), and dispensing of this product shall comply with the requirements the Michigan Flammable and Combustible Liquids Rules.**

In the same memo, university officials recommended that procurement officials within the various offices on campus purchase hand sanitizer dispensers containing benzalkonium chloride (BZK).

Amidst fears of an outbreak of the H1N1 virus (a.k.a., "Swine Flu") this fall and a deluge of news stories and CDC recommendations on the subject, one can only wonder how long it will be before other schools follow Michigan's lead.

UPDATE 9-2-09: One of my advertisers, **CLEANpHIRST™** published a [blog post](#) highlighting the fire danger involved with alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Makes the University of Michigan's decision above seem pretty wise.

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