



2026 ChemE Cube Safety Rules

1.0 Program Overview

The objective of the ChemE Cube Safety Program is to ensure safety is considered during all phases of the competition, including prototype development (construction and testing) and the competition. The safety program consists of a compliance audit and competition safety rules. A review of the product design and a compliance evaluation will be conducted from the documentation provided by competing teams, and an onsite audit of the product by safety professionals.

2.0 Experimentation and Building of Cube

Teams should follow their university safety guidelines regarding lab usage, chemical handling, storage and disposal practices, PPE usage, 3D printing, machine shop, use of fabrication tools, and all other labs.

3.0 Safety Review Process

Teams will design a cube that can capture carbon dioxide (CO₂) using a direct air capture (DAC) technique in alignment with the 2026 ChemE Cube Problem Statement. Teams will develop a working prototype of their design and describe the design in a document called an Engineering Documentation Package (EDP). The EDP contains information about the design, and includes a description of the process, technical data, chemical information, and information on hazards and safeguards.

Teams will be required to consider safety as they conceptualize the design. They will also be required to complete safety training prior to working in the lab or with a 3D printer, if applicable, or other fabrication tools to develop a prototype. When the team has completed a prototype (i.e., the cube mini-plant hardware that will be used in the competition) and an EDP (signed by a supervising faculty member), a team of safety professionals will review the design and conduct two compliance audits (online and onsite). Safety professionals will assess the design and the physical prototype for hazards, ensure that these hazards have been mitigated to the extent possible, and that adequate safeguards are present to protect participants and audience members during operation of the prototype on competition day.

The safety review process steps (for safety professionals):

1. Complete the Chemical Screening Form



2. Review the EDP documentation.
3. Complete the EDP Review form.
4. Return EDP Review forms to teams via RAPID staff to allow product revisions as needed.
5. Revise EDP for any comments and resubmit.
6. Complete an onsite safety assessment of the prototype and EDP.
7. Attest by signature that each prototype is compliant with the safety rules for the competition, which permit teams to compete.

4.0 Compliance Audit

A preliminary compliance audit of the cube design will occur as part of the Virtual Qualifying Presentation presented by teams in order to qualify for the ChemE Cube Competition. Teams will be required to present at least one slide as part of their presentation which describes potential hazards associated with their design which demonstrates that teams have adequately anticipated and mitigated safety risks and hazards in their cube design. Safety considerations should include, but are not limited to:

- Potential loss of containment
- Waste considerations
- Chemical compatibility
- Expected side reactions or hazardous materials generated
- Potential risk to human health
- Control mechanisms
- Safety considerations with scale-up or number-up
- Personal protective equipment

Note: should any major safety concerns be flagged during the preliminary compliance audit, your team may be required to complete a more comprehensive safety review (in the form of a Zoom meeting) by the RAPID team and require a faculty signature before commencing on the build portion of the competition.

A compliance audit of the physical cube prototype will occur in three stages:

- ~2 months prior to the competition: Online evaluation where teams will submit an Engineering Documentation Package (EDP) electronically and receive feedback. A RAPID staff member will communicate EDP instructions to all teams. **Failure to meet the posted deadline may result in exclusion from the competition.** The EDP template is available for download on the ChemE Cube Competition Website: [2026 ChemE Cube Competition Powered by RAPID | ExxonMobil | AIChE](#)



- ~1 month prior to the competition: If applicable, students will resend an updated version of their EDP addressing all comments made in the first review.
- On November 2nd: Onsite evaluation where teams must bring a printed EDP, printed EDP reviewer feedback and a printed Management of Change (MOC) Form all in a folder or binder. Teams should be ready to answer questions from a compliance auditor during a live safety review of their product. Teams must pass both online and onsite evaluations to compete.

4.1 Safety Audit: Online

An engineering documentation package (EDP) for your ChemE Cube must be completed and submitted by the posted deadline. A complete EDP will include the following:

Section 1.0 DAC Operation, Hazards, and Safety: Please describe the cube, including a description of the process's capabilities and limitations, statements describing hazards present and safety measures to mitigate the hazards. Justify your choices.

Section 2.0 User Operating instructions: Include a paragraph explaining how the cube operates, and if maintenance is required, waste disposal, etc. Be brief and limit technical jargon, this is for a potential future user, not for your use on competition day.

Section 3.0 Technical Specifications Data Sheet: Provide engineering drawings, PFDs, P&ID, checklist on operating details of cube, and bill of materials.

Section 4.0 Control Software Program: Teams will provide a copy of code and its purpose.

Section 5.0 Pressure Specification: If applicable, provide details explaining how the cube operates at pressures greater than 1 psig and how the outlet pressure is reduced to 1 psig.

Section 6.0 Photos: Submit 6 pictures of your cube after construction has been completed. These pictures must be current. The entire cube must be visible in each picture. The pictures will be from the following points of view; side 1, side 2, side 3, side 4, top looking down, and top looking down with enclosure removed. Clearly identify inlet/outlet gas lines, power connections, and on/off switch (if applicable). *A drawing or solid model (i.e., CAD model) is NOT acceptable.*



Section 7.0 Lab Hazard Assessment: Provide the floor plan for the laboratory where cube construction and testing took place. Include the location major fabrication tools and list the location of the available safety equipment and spill response supplies on the diagram.

Section 8.0 Cube Hazard Analysis: Consider the DAC technique employed within the cube and indicate whether a hazard is present. Some of the hazards include, but are not limited to, chemical, temperature, pressure, mechanical, and electrical, and dust/solid particles that arise from pouring solid material. Teams should document the safeguards they have incorporated relevant to mitigate each hazard present.

Section 9.0 Fabrication Hazard Analysis: In addition to the product hazards associated with the cube, there are also hazards present in the laboratory or fabrication site where prototype development and testing may occur. Teams should use the hazard identification form in the EDP template to identify any hazards associated with the lab or fabrication site, and document the control method used to safeguard against the hazard. When appropriate, students should document the PPE needed for each task. If uncertain, check with your team faculty advisor.

Section 10.0 Chemical Information: Include a description of the chemistry involved, and a list of any chemicals to be sent to the competition.

Section 11.0 Treatment Chemical Hazards and Disposal: List the properties for every chemical, typically found on the SDS. If a chemical is not flammable, please write N/A. Teams should attach a SDS for every chemical that will be used inside the cube to capture CO₂, if applicable, at the end of the EDP document.

Section 12.0 Standard/Safe operating procedures page: This section requires your team to conduct research related to hazards presented by your cube during start-up, operation, shutdown, cleanup / waste disposal, and in the event of emergency shutdown. Please refer to the NIOSH website to search for and locate information on hazard mitigation. When not applicable, indicate N/A.

Section 13.0 Safety Rules: This section is a summary of the competition's safety rules. They are provided here for the convenience of signing faculty.

Section 14.0 Safety Certifications: This page is used to document that students have completed the required safety training for the laboratory and fabrication tools (e.g., 3D printer, band saw, drill press, etc.). Each team member must sign and date, and the supervising faculty member must attest that they have read the



safety rules, and that students have completed the training. They are also signing to acknowledge that the team has completed the EDP, and that the faculty advisor or outside expert has completed a safety review of the cube.

Section 15.0 Management of Change Form: After the online EDP review, if you make any changes to the product design or the EDP itself, you must complete the Management of Change (MOC) form included at the end of the EDP.

4.2 Safety Audit: Onsite.

At the competition site, an audit team will inspect each entry to ensure that all the safety requirements have been met, and there are no outstanding safety issues. The onsite audit team has the final say regarding permission to compete, regardless of whether a design was previously cleared. During the safety audit, teams will be given the opportunity to attach their cube to all the connections.

5.0 Competition Safety Rules

- 1. No transporting chemicals.** Teams are not allowed to transport/ship chemicals by car to the competition site. No chemicals should be transported in private, university or rental vehicles to and from the competition site, even over short distances. Teams **MUST** use the chemical ordering form if any chemicals are needed on-site. **Failure to follow will result in the team being disqualified from participating in the run.** Contact chemEcube@aiche.org for any questions or clarifications or are having issues ordering any chemicals.
- 2. No chemical storage.** Chemicals must not be stored in hotel rooms or other facilities not rated for chemical storage. **If it is discovered that teams were storing chemicals, the team will be disqualified from participating in the run.**
- 3. No unauthorized testing.** Testing of cubes must only be done in a laboratory or other facility with chemical handling capability. Testing in hotel or dorm hallways, warehouses, or other facilities that are not designed for chemical handling is not allowed. No mixing of chemicals, including common household chemicals, is allowed in the hotel or in dorm hallways. **If it is discovered that a team performed any unauthorized testing, the team will be disqualified from the entire competition.**
- 4. Shipping Chemicals/hazardous materials.** Teams will be given a Chemical Order Form to order the required chemicals needed during the competition. Teams that create custom chemicals/materials will be consulted on a case-by-case basis and will be given guidance/approval by the ChemE Cube safety coordinator. **DO NOT** ship your own materials before receiving prior approval from RAPID. **Failure to do so will result in disqualification from the run.**



5. **Illegal Disposal of Chemicals.** All chemicals shipped to the competition site must be disposed of in a safe and correct fashion in compliance with all local, state and federal regulatory measures. **Failure to follow these rules on chemical handling will result in a multi-year suspension of your university.** Please minimize chemicals shipped to the competition site to reduce disposal costs.
6. **Liquid/Solid Discharge.** No other liquid/solid discharge, including water, is allowed. All other liquids should be properly contained within the cube, and properly disposed of (example, use of a holding tank). All interior components must be sealed so that there is no build up within the body of the cube. Cube components should be dry at the start of the competition, so that leaks can be observed.
7. **Autonomous Operation.** Cubes must work autonomously. After startup, the cube may not be opened during the DAC process. When the competition begins, students will only be permitted to input challenge ambient air by opening a valve/ turning the unit on.
8. **No Regulated Chemicals.** No chemicals regulated by OSHA will be allowed during the competition. *A number of chemicals are listed by OSHA as a special hazard. The handling of these chemicals is outside the scope of the management systems available during the competition. See www.osha.gov for details.*
9. **No Highly Reactive/Unstable Chemicals.** No chemical, raw material, intermediate or product that is highly reactive or unstable will be permitted. This includes chemicals with a GHS hazard category level 1 ranking in any of the following categories; pyrophoric solids and liquids, acute toxicity, carcinogenicity, other toxicity hazards not specifically listed, and hazardous to the ozone layer. This also includes any chemical on the extremely hazardous substances list published by EPA.
10. **No Liquid Hydrogen Peroxide Concentrations Greater than 30%.** Liquid hydrogen peroxide is very unstable and difficult to handle at concentrations greater than 30%.
11. **Pressure Restrictions.** Any equipment within the cube operating above 1 psig should include a certification from the manufacturer that it can safely operate at that pressure. If gas is generated within the cube, indicate how it will be vented safely. If internal components operate above 1 psig, the system must have a certified pressure reducing valve to reduce exhaust gas pressure to at most 1 psig.
12. **Biologics.** Biological materials after use will need to be inactivated with bleach.
13. **Chemical Containment.** The primary containment must be adequate to prevent leakage of chemicals during normal operation and transport of the cube.



13.1. Lids. All lids on containers containing chemicals must be securely attached to the container and should cover the entire container opening. Please ensure that any holes in the lid or container are just big enough to accommodate the “through hole item” – seal if possible. Saran™ wrap, Parafilm™, aluminum foil and other similar materials are not adequate for use as container covers.

13.2. Secondary Containment. Secondary containment is required for chemicals with a GHS health or physical hazard of any ranking (1–4) and basic water solutions. The secondary containment must be of suitable durability and size to hold the contents of any spilled chemicals and prevent them from accumulating within the body of the cube. The cube itself does NOT qualify as secondary containment.

13.3. Filters. Dust filters for units holding solids and mist eliminators for units holding liquids are required within your system to prevent these materials from escaping into the outlet air stream. Ensure you select the correct sized filter based on the material choice and size.

14. Temperature Hazards. All exterior surfaces of the cube must be less than 120°F. Insulation or barriers on internal components must be present to prevent accidental contact with hot or cold surfaces/components outside the range 32°F–90°F.

15. Electrical Hazards All wiring and exposed electrical components must be insulated or covered to prevent the possibility of electrical shock or ignition of any component of a cube. Alligator clips and twisted wires represent both an electrical shock hazard and an ignition source. Use more robust electrical connectors such as terminal connectors, banana plugs or binding posts.

16. Mechanical Hazards Guards must be present for any moving parts and pinch points. This includes gears, belts, linkages, actuator arms and any other part that may present a pinch point.

17. Accidents.

If a safety incident occurs during the competition, the advisor of that team will be informed that an incident analysis report must be submitted to chemecube@aiche.org. This safety incident report must be approved by the ChemE Cube competition RAPID staff member before any team from that university is allowed to compete in any future competition.

18. Competition Day Rules



18.1.PPE: Each team must provide the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for use in the preparation “pit” area, as identified in their EDP and must use them properly. This includes lab coats, safety glasses, gloves, face shields, dust mask for handling materials that can produce aerosols, and hearing protection. The personal protective equipment must be used appropriately by all team members depending on the hazards encountered during the chemical preparation.

18.2.Labeling Containers. All containers with chemicals, including bottles, beakers, syringes and plastic bags must be properly labeled. The label must minimally include the name of the chemical(s), and the name of the team. See Appendix B for more information on chemical labeling.

18.3.Spill Containment at Table. All chemical pouring or mixing in the preparation area must be done with spill containment. The team must use a large tray compatible with the chemicals, with a volume large enough to hold the chemical quantities.

18.4.Chemical Distribution. All chemicals will be made available to the teams in the chemical preparation area at least one (1) hour prior to the performance competition.

19.Requesting Assistance. There is no restriction on requesting assistance for safety related matters. Teams are encouraged to request additional safety assistance from their faculty advisor, other faculty members, other universities, other teams, and professional practitioners in industry and elsewhere.



Appendix A. Chemical Handling and Disposal

A.1 Introduction

All students who handle chemicals either at their host institution or at a regional or Annual competition must understand the hazardous properties of these chemicals. The following are general rules for safety. **Please follow your university lab rules and the rules of the chemical unit at the competition site.** Before using a specific chemical, safe handling methods must always be reviewed. Faculty advisers are responsible for ensuring that the equipment needed to work safely with chemicals is provided.

A.2 General Rules for Chemical Safety

A. Safety Data Sheets (SDS) must be available in the laboratory for all chemicals, including those in storage in the laboratory.

B. When purchasing chemicals, purchase the smallest quantity necessary to complete the planned experiments. The cost of disposal of unused chemicals far exceeds the savings from quantity purchases.

C. Skin contact with chemicals must be generally avoided.

D. No more than 2-gallons of flammable solvent should be out in the laboratory at any one time. Store bulk flammable containers in a flammable storage cabinet.

E. All containers (including those in storage) must be labeled – see the section on labeling below. Any unlabeled container must be treated as a hazardous substance.

F. Wear compatible gloves and apron when handling strong acids and bases.

G. Use a grounding strap and/or dip leg when transferring flammable chemicals into a storage tank.

H. Transport all chemicals using a safety carrier. The chemical must be in a closed container.

I. Chemical containers must be kept away from high temperatures, the edge of the lab bench, and other areas where an incident might lead to loss of containment.



- J. Mouth suction for pipetting or starting a siphon is not allowed.
- K. Unknown substances must be treated as toxic and flammable.
- L. Do not taste or smell any chemicals.
- M. Operations involving chemicals should generally be done in a laboratory hood.

A.3 Chemical Storage

- A. SDS's must be available for all chemicals stored.
- B. ALL chemicals stored must be properly labelled.
- C. No chemicals shall be stored on the top of lab benches or out in the open. Chemicals must not be stored over eye level height to prevent accidents from dropping containers.
- D. Flammable and volatile chemicals must be stored in a cabinet designated for flammable storage. Refrigerated storage of these chemicals requires a refrigerator rated for storing flammables.
- E. Acids and bases should be stored separately.
- F. Acid-resistant trays shall be placed under stored acid containers.
- G. Acid-sensitive materials such as cyanides and sulfides must be separated from acids.
- H. Oxidizable materials should be stored away from acids and bases.
- I. Stored chemicals must be examined on a regular basis by the laboratory personnel (at least annually) to inspect for deterioration, container integrity, and expired dates. Chemicals which are not being used should be disposed of or returned to Chemical Stores for recycling.
- J. An inventory of stored chemicals must be always maintained by the laboratory owner. Leftover items shall be properly discarded or returned to Chemical Stores. Store only what you are using.


A.4 Chemical Labeling

All chemicals must be labeled, even during temporary transport. This includes lab samples, temporary containers, etc. A proper chemical label must include:

- ▶ Name, address and telephone number
- ▶ Product Identifier
- ▶ Signal word
- ▶ Hazard statement(s)
- ▶ Precautionary statements
- ▶ Pictograms


Pictograms are required on labels to alert users of the chemical hazards to which they may be exposed. Each pictogram consists of a symbol on a white background framed within a red border and represents a distinct hazard. Here are examples of GHS pictograms you may encounter.

Health Hazard




- Carcinogen
- Mutagenicity
- Reproductive Toxicity
- Respiratory Sensitizer
- Target Organ Toxicity
- Aspiration Toxicity

Flame

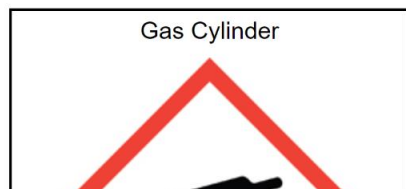


- Flammables
- Pyrophorics
- Self-Heating
- Emits Flammable Gas
- Self-Reactives
- Organic Peroxides

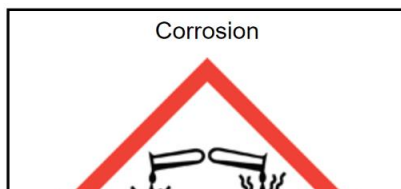
Exclamation Mark



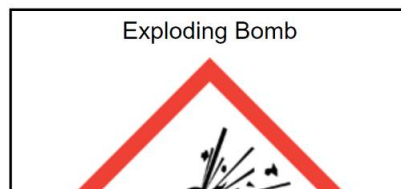
- Irritant (skin and eye)
- Skin Sensitizer
- Acute Toxicity (harmful)
- Narcotic Effects
- Respiratory Tract Irritant
- Hazardous to Ozone Layer (Non-Mandatory)



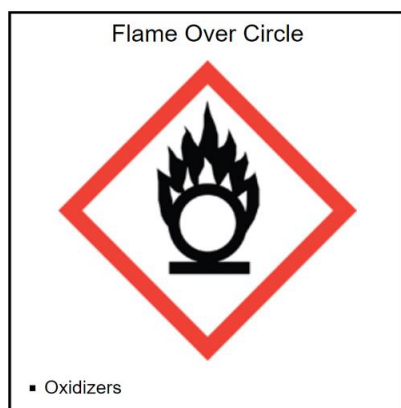
- Gases Under Pressure



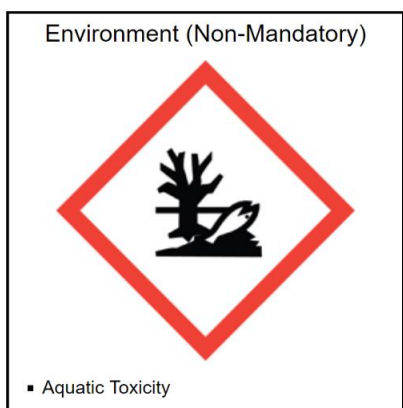
- Skin Corrosion/Burns
- Eye Damage
- Corrosive to Metals



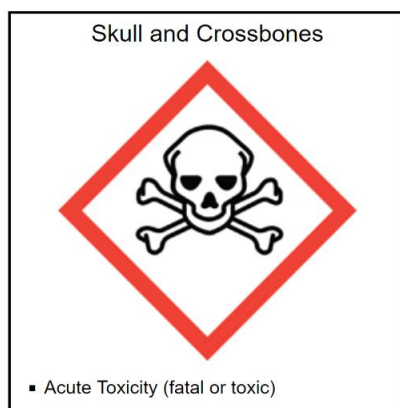
- Explosives
- Self-Reactives
- Organic Peroxides



- Oxidizers



- Aquatic Toxicity



- Acute Toxicity (fatal or toxic)

A.5 Chemical Disposal

All chemicals must be disposed of in a safe and environmentally friendly manner. Any chemical substance which is corrosive, flammable, reactive, toxic, radioactive, infectious, phytotoxic, mutagenic, or acutely hazardous must be treated as hazardous waste. Do not dispose of chemicals by evaporation in a fume hood or in the sink. Do not hesitate to ask if any questions occur about the hazards of a material.

Collect and store chemical waste in containers which are clearly labeled. Do not combine containers unless the contents in each container is known, is compatible, and it is certain that it is safe to do so. Combined wastes are much more difficult and costly to dispose of properly.

Ordinary waste such as paper, cardboard, etc., may be placed in the wastebasket. However, contaminated waste must be disposed of separately in a labeled container.



Empty chemical containers must also be disposed of in an acceptable fashion. They must first be cleaned and then either returned to Chemical Stores or disposed of through normal trash.