

✓UPS chemical spill sends 13 employees to hospital

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SANTA CRUZ — A chemical spill this morning at United Parcel Service on River Street sent 13 people to the hospital as a precautionary measure.

The chemical was later determined to be relatively harmless. The 13 were treated for minor skin irritations at Dominican Hospital and released.

The chemical — I-methyl-2-Pyrrolidinone — had been shipped from Somerville, N.J., en route to Seagate Technology in Scotts Valley.

The spill was noticed by two

workers at approximately 7 a.m. as they were unloading boxes from a trailer. The chemical — in a glass container — was leaking from a box.

One of the workers, who gave his name as "Randy," said he didn't feel any skin irritation from possible contact with the leaking chemical. "The worst thing is breathing it," he said.

The other man unloading the chemical was taken to the hospital by ambulance after suffering a "significant exposure to the chemical," said a Santa Cruz firefighter at the spill.

The exposed worker was one of the 13 who were treated and released, according to a Dominican Hospital

spokeswoman.

A distinct, solvent-type odor remained in the yard outside the UPS offices an hour or so after the leaking chemical had been detected.

County Environmental Health Officer Ilsa Kolbus and Seagate representatives provided information regarding the possible hazardous nature of the chemical, said Santa Cruz Fire Capt. Grant Weseman. Their information determined the chemical could be considered a skin irritant only, he said.

When the relatively harmless nature of the chemical was reported, UPS agreed to take responsibility for the cleanup.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Santa Cruz Fireman Matt McCaslin checks leaky cartons at UPS office.