

## Book Reviews

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*Dangerous Properties of Industrial Materials*, 4th edn., by N. Irving Sax, Van Nostrand Reinhold Company, New York, 1975, 1258 pages, £21.25.

Previous editions of this work have established "Sax", as it is commonly known, as one of the foremost reference works of its kind: in any organisation which is involved with chemicals, it is frequently the first source of reference for hazard data on an unfamiliar substance.

The General Chemicals section for which the book is best known, now printed on brownish paper for ease of location, includes data on nearly 13,000 common industrial and laboratory chemicals, compared with 12,000 in the third edition, an increase, one feels, not comparable with the number of new chemicals which must have come into use since 1968, but no doubt reflecting the work involved in collecting and validating data. Indexing is unchanged, being alphabetical by common name, with adequate cross-referencing, so one finds the expected chemical names interspersed with tradenames and the names of all kinds of everyday substances, some random examples of which are mohair, peanuts, gin and sawdust. In addition, the section can be used to advantage as an index to the other sections of the book, a point which could be stated on the Contents page. The Hazard Analysis data which forms the book's great value is very variable. It is usually coded according to a simple rating code (explained at the bottom of every alternate page), and often toxicology, fire and disaster hazards are elaborated upon. Countermeasures are usually by reference to other sections, but sometimes these are given at length. A particularly valuable feature is the inclusion of the general properties of groups of substances, for use if data on the particular substance in question cannot be found.

The 11 sections forming the first part of the book supply the reference material for the General Chemicals Section and give an introduction to some topics relevant to the understanding and control of hazards. These can sometimes be criticised on the grounds of inadequate coverage of the subject heading; for example, the section on solid waste hazards deals almost exclusively with municipal refuse, and says very little about industrial wastes. However, they contain valuable data, the presence of which is not always apparent without detailed reading, which is perhaps not likely to be undertaken by the average user of this book. The need is clear, then, for a separate index to cover this point, to include those items in the General Chemicals Section which were commented upon earlier. This addition would further enhance the book's value as a standard reference source on chemical hazards, a position which it seems likely to hold for some time to come.

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