

## Book review

*Basics of Toxicology*, Chris Kent, Wiley, New York, NY, 1998, US\$49.95, 8 1/2 × 11 in. format, 402 pp., ISBN: 0-471-29982-0

This book was written to provide beginning environmental technology students with a broad overview of the discipline of toxicology in an “enjoyable and effective way.”

The author and I agree on an initial approach to a topic and that is, create a “need to know.” He does that (as many writers do) by describing the devastating methyl isocyanate leak at Bhopal, India in 1984. Kent then moves to describe the historical background of toxicology beginning with plant poisons such as hemlock in 1500 BC. Sources of chemical information (including electronic databases) and the role of the toxicologist complete the first chapter.

At this point, I note some useful features of this book:

- statement of chapter objectives at the beginning of each chapter
- index of chapter subtopics on the first page of the chapter
- a “checking your understanding” list at the end of each subsection
- final summary at the end of each chapter
- section entitled “application and critical thinking activities” at the end of each chapter; this section forms the basis for student assignments

Subsequent chapters discuss:

- Epidemiological and Toxicological Studies
- Routes of Exposure
- The Dose-Response Relationship
- Absorption, Distribution, Metabolism, and Elimination of Toxics
- Target organ Effects
- Survey of Toxic Substances
- Radiation, Pathogens, and Naturally Occurring Toxins
- Mutagens, Teratogens, and carcinogens
- Risk Assessment and Acute Exposure Treatment

The book ends with an 800-item glossary and comprehensive index.

Also worthy of note in the text are:

- Its excellent (more than 150) line drawings, photographs, diagrams, charts and tables

- Extensive bibliography
- Quick listing of all U.S. federal laws relevant to toxic compounds
- 20-page listing of common (toxic) chemicals, symptoms, causes and their treatment.

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