UMassAmherst | Environmental Health & Safety

Bleach Fact Sheet

Bleach Shelf Life:
After a shelf life of six months, bleach starts to degrade. Concentrated bleach loses its effectiveness as a disinfectant after **1 year**. Please instruct staff to write the "received by" date on the bottle and use this date to determine expiration.

Bleach Storage:
Bleach should be stored between 50°F and 70F° and away from direct sunlight; this pertains to bottles that are both sealed and opened. To keep bleach effective for as long as possible, avoid storing it in extremely hot or freezing conditions.

Bleach Concentrations:
According to CDC: Please use regular unscented household bleach. Most household bleach contains 5%–9% sodium hypochlorite. Do not use a bleach product if the percentage is not in this range or is not specified. This includes some types of laundry bleach or splashless bleach, which are not appropriate for disinfection. (CDC: https://www.cdc.gov/hygiene/cleaning/disinfecting-bleach.html)
The minimum concentration for disinfection should be **5.25%** sodium hypochlorite.

How to Read the Expiration Date on Bleach Bottle?

1. There usually is a printed code on the neck of the bottle, it could be two lines or one line (see pictures above). If it's a two-line code, read the top line; If it's a one-line code, read from left to right.

2. The code we use as an example is **A822 13019**: 48CA3. Bleach production codes always start with a letter and number, which indicates the plant where the bottle was made, such as A8. Ignore this and keep reading to get to the production date.

3. Split up the letters and digits to find the date. After the plant code (in this case, A8) comes the date the bottle was made, which starts with the last two digits of the year (in this case, **22**), followed by the Julian date (in this case, **130**). Julian dates give the numbered day out of 365 total days in a year. For example, a bottle stamped A822 13019: 48CA3 was made in **2022** on the **130th day of the year**, or **May 10th**. The final two numbers (in this case, 19) are simply a manufacturing shift identification code.

4. Julian dates: if you need help with Julian dates, please feel free to use the converter tool: http://www.longpelaexpertise.com/toolsJulian.php

Please feel free to contact EH&S (askehs@umass.edu) if you have any questions or concerns.