

Tek's chief chemist honored for contributions

By DON LEIGHTON

When Tek's recently retired chief chemist, Chet Schink (Ph.D. in chemistry) came to work at Tektronix in 1956, it didn't take him long to make an impact on the company. Within three days of starting work, he instigated the use of safety glasses on a chemical process line.

This is just one example of Chet's attitude that frequently helped place Tektronix at the forefront in employee safety and environmental protection.

"Over the years, we've made tremendous strides, and now we have a marvelous safety program," Chet commented in an interview just before his retirement.

When Tek's industrial waste treatment plant was being planned in the early '60's, there wasn't much in the way of state standards. So Chet scoured the country and found that Ohio had the best set of standards at that time. Borrowing from Ohio, and consulting with people in Oregon, Chet and Tektronix helped establish some standards for Oregon.

And Chet was instrumental in establishing the diamond label for chemical containers that's now required in Oregon. The label has three sections that indicate flammable, alkali (caustic), or acid material. The degree of hazard is indicated by numbers 1-4. A 3 or 4 in a section indicates special care should be taken in handling the material.



THE RIGHT CHEMISTRY—Chet Schink (recently retired as Tek's chief chemist) received a plaque in recognition of his special contributions to Tektronix. Earl Wantland (Tek president), left, and Wim Velsink (executive vice president) made the presentation.

Chet also made a direct contribution to Tek's early product prowess by helping to develop an "antiflare" coating for CRT's used in oscilloscopes. This coating helped control stray electrons that might otherwise hit the display phosphor. The importance of this coating was considered too

important to reveal to the public in a patent application.

Because of these and other achievements, Chet was presented a special recognition plaque recently by Earl Wantland (Tek president) and Wim Velsink (executive vice president). Wim

described Chet's contributions to his profession and to Tektronix as "far above the ordinary."

It was through Chet's efforts that Tek developed its own chemical safety data sheets long before a law required suppliers to provide the information.

Chet also established a questionnaire for vendors to find out the properties of material that Tek was buying. "If they wouldn't tell us, we'd analyze it ourselves," Chet recalled. Suppliers are now required by law to provide that information.

In his "Mr. Wizard" type chemical handling demonstrations to employees, Chet would stress that there are no non-hazardous chemicals, only non-hazardous ways of using them. "Water can cause drowning," he reminds us. And he points out that we commonly use hazardous chemicals around the home. For example, he says, people will use sodium hydroxide (otherwise known as lye, Drano, Liquid Plumber) to clean out drains without using eye protection. And yet a single drop of this material could cause blindness, he said.

"It's not only what it is, but how much that counts," Chet said. "The dose is very important. The body tolerates small 'insults' of all kinds and recovers. It's the massive doses that can do us in.

"We shouldn't be worried about whether to use chemicals, but how to use them safely. Any chemical can be used safely if its properties are well understood."