

MORE ABOUT ETCHANT DISPOSAL

Robert K. Deunk's scathing attack on one of my PC etchant disposal methods was totally unwarranted (Letters, May 1980 issue.). He predicted grave consequences if sodium carbonate is added directly to the expended etchant, which he calls a "strong" acid. If Deunk had done his homework he would have realized that fresh, undiluted ferric chloride etchant contains less than 6% acid (HCl), a relatively weak solution in chemical terms.

A six percent solution of HCl is hazardous to the eyes and skin but is far too weak to cause the predicted violent reaction even if a large amount of sodium carbonate were added *en masse* to pure etchant. The recommended procedure of diluting the expended etchant with water and adding the sodium carbonate *slowly* is to control foaming, not because of an overheating problem. The method is both safe and convenient.

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