



## Potassium

We have recently heard reports that some suppliers may be selling schools quantities of old stocks of potassium. These can be recognized by the yellow surface coating of the superoxide,  $\text{KO}_2$ .

If cut, such samples may explode, when the superoxide coating is forced into contact with the mineral oil in which potassium is stored.

If you have had a recent delivery of potassium check the stock, and if the surface is yellow, ask the supplier to take it back. Schools should, of course, be in the habit of regularly checking stocks of potassium, and other chemicals with a short shelf-life, for signs of deterioration.

Small samples of yellow-coated potassium can be destroyed by allowing them to dissolve in 2-methylpropan-2-ol (tert-butyl alcohol), in a fume cupboard. Do NOT use methanol or ethanol as the solvent. Note that the solvent must be dry.