
8. Code Orange: Hazardous Materials Incident

Hazardous materials are substances that are flammable or combustible, explosive, toxic, noxious, corrosive, oxidizable, an irritant, or radioactive. A hazardous material spill or release can pose a risk to life, health, or property. “

A warning of a hazardous accident or incident is usually received from the Fire and/or Police Departments or from Emergency Management officials. An overturned tanker, truck, or train, a crashed airplane, a broken fuel line, or an accident in a chemical plant are all potential hazards.”³

There are a number of federal laws that regulate hazardous materials, including: the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA), the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (RCRA), the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act (HMTA), the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA), the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA), and the Clean Air Act.

Title III of SARA regulates the packaging, labeling, handling, storage, and transportation of hazardous materials. The law requires facilities to furnish information about the quantities and health effects of materials used at the facility, and to promptly notify local and state officials whenever a significant release of hazardous materials occurs.

Planning considerations regarding hazardous materials:

1. Identify and label all hazardous materials stored, handled, produced, and disposed of by your facility. Follow government regulations that apply to your facility. Obtain material safety data sheets (MSDS) for all hazardous materials at your location.
2. Train employees to recognize and report hazardous material spills and releases. Train employees in proper handling and storage.
3. Identify any hazardous materials used in facility processes and in the construction of the physical plant.
 - a. Identify other facilities in your area that use hazardous materials. Determine whether an incident could affect your facility.
4. Identify potential for an off-site incident affecting operation.
 - a. Identify highways, railroads, and waterways near the facility used for the transportation of hazardous materials. Determine how a transportation accident near the facility could affect your operations.

Detailed definitions as well as lists of hazardous materials can be obtained from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA).

³ *Disaster Planning Guide, A Resource Manual for Developing a Comprehensive Preparedness Plan*, Florida Health Care Association, August 2005, Page 17.