

Agency Roles in Response to HAZMAT

In a major incident a local government may have to call on state agencies for specialized resources and knowledge. Such an action could involve a number of state agencies:

- The Office of Emergency Services arranges state and regional mutual aid support and provides liaison with state agencies.
- The Department of Transportation assists in or provides identification and containment of all materials on state highways and freeways or unincorporated county roadways.
- The State Police or Highway Patrol provides general control of the perimeter of the incident (regulating traffic, for example) and will play other roles depending on state law and incident requirements.
 - The Department of Fish and Game and regional Water Quality Control boards provide recommendations and guidelines when hazardous material spills are likely to contaminate streams or waterways or otherwise would affect wildlife resources.
- State Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) personnel often possess a large reservoir of technical knowledge useful to an incident commander in the areas of exposure to, protection from, and control of hazardous materials. In an incident in which employees have been injured because of exposure, or in a prolonged incident, state OSHA personnel may respond. The state Department of Health employs health scientists who can help assess the potential human impact of a toxic release.
- The state Department of Environmental Protection can predict the environmental impact of actions the incident commander is considering.
- The state and local fire marshals have specific expertise relating to chemical behavior and state fire codes.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food Safety Inspection Service, is the agency that oversees food inspection for human safety, including carcasses that may have been exposed to hazardous materials. In some states the state Department of Agriculture performs most meat and poultry inspection.

In the event of an incident, the federal government also can provide assistance to the local incident commander through the National Response Center. This center, staffed by the U.S. Coast Guard, operates a 24-hour hotline to receive and relay notices of major hazmat discharges to the appropriate authorities. When needed the NRC can also make the expertise and resources of other federal agencies available to the local government.

The EPA is primarily responsible for hazardous waste site operations, cleanup activities, and environmental impact.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) establishes the nation's overall transportation policy. It bears the primary responsibility for issuing standards and regulations relating to the transportation of hazardous materials from state to state.

The Department of Energy (DOE) has the primary responsibility in the hazardous materials arena involving radioactive waste generated by the nuclear weapons program or by nuclear reactors that supply energy.

The Department of Defense (DOD) is responsible for maintaining manpower, equipment, and other resources for potential use in military conflict. The DOD manufactures, stores, and discards a full range of hazardous materials and is also one of the nation's largest shippers of such materials. The DOD also can provide response teams and equipment.

The Department of Labor through OSHA is responsible for establishing rules and standards to ensure that occupational environments are safe for workers. As part of this function, OSHA regulates employee safety and health at hazardous waste operations, in work environments where hazardous materials are present, or during emergency response to incidents involving hazardous materials.

The National Agricultural Chemicals Association has identified a group of specialists designated as the Pesticides Safety Team. The team provides advice for incidents involving pesticides and will dispatch a response team to the site if one is needed.

Finally, FEMA is available to provide additional financial relief in the event of an incident so serious that both local and state funds prove inadequate.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration and Disaster Preparedness

Meeting OSHA's legal requirements is a good starting point for becoming involved in disaster management programs at all levels because the vast majority of issues that arise in disasters are the same as those that occur during everyday business.

To some, OSHA regulations may seem like an imposition, but they have evolved out of the experience that disasters and emergencies are a common cause of human injury in the workplace and that many of these can be prevented. OSHA requires a systematic approach to disaster preparedness for businesses. Complying with OSHA regulations is generally beneficial to companies in that compliance reduces the number of injuries to staff, the severity of injury when accidents occur, and the losses caused by business disruption and the consequences of litigation when procedures have not been followed. These are the goals of any business or community disaster preparedness program. Adaptation of the principles of human safety in emergencies, such as evacuations, can be readily adapted by animal health professionals to the care of animals.

Much of what is described in the following pages can be applied to individual small businesses as well as to chains and larger corporations. However, for corporations and chains to develop effective disaster preparedness plans, a commitment of time and resources is needed from the companies' management. This commitment should allocate time and resources to identify the needs, develop plans, and implement them through employee training and repeated exercises in each of their businesses.

Table 13-1 Some useful OSHA publications for Emergency Contingency Plans

Title	Publication No.
<i>All About OSHA</i>	OSHA-2056
<i>OSHA Inspections</i>	OSHA-2098
<i>Employee Workplace Rights</i>	OSHA-3021
<i>Consultation Services for the Employer</i>	OSHA-3047
<i>How to Prepare for Workplace Emergencies</i>	OSHA-3048
<i>Job Hazard Analysis</i>	OSHA-3071
<i>Personal Protective Equipment</i>	OSHA-3077
<i>Respiratory Equipment</i>	OSHA-3079
<i>Hazard Communications Summary</i>	OSHA-3084
<i>Hazard Communication Standard</i>	29 CFR 1910.1200
<i>Inspection Procedures for the HCS</i>	CPL 2-2.38A

OSHA can be contacted at its website (<http://www.osha.gov>).

Sources of Training in Hazardous Materials

Animal care professionals can of course readily become trained in hazmat control. Specialized hazmat training is highly recommended for such professionals because hazmat incidents have the potential to occur frequently in veterinary medicine (e.g., spillage of bulk chemicals in veterinary practice and on farms and oil spills along coastlines). Animals also have great potential to act as effective hazmat fomites in disasters (e.g., after coming into contact with contaminated floodwaters).

Hazmat incidents are common, especially in any disaster. To deal with this, emergency management agencies (EMAs) have developed separate training and response modules. The priorities of a hazmat response are to save lives, limit casualties, protect the environment, limit damage to property, and restore community life to normal function as soon as possible. These objectives can be achieved only through an appropriate level of preparedness. The best protection against hazardous chemicals is to prevent spills altogether.

Veterinarians need to be aware of the increased demand by the North American public to have hazmat issues dealt with in a safe and efficient manner. These expectations are reflected in the demands put upon the veterinary profession by OSHA that strongly emphasize appropriate procedures for dealing with hazardous materials in a veterinary practice. Many local or state EMAs, EPAs, fire departments, and DNR Fish and Game Services organize continuing education courses in hazmat incident response. Because there is limited expertise for dealing with animals exposed to hazardous materials, which are public or environmental threats, veterinarians who acquire the appropriate credentials in hazmat control are likely to assume authoritative recognition in this area. The demand for veterinary hazmat expertise is likely to be greatest at the local level.