

Unit Ten Appendix

The Role of State Agencies in Hazardous Materials Spills

- State Office of Emergency Services—Arranges state and regional mutual aid support and provides liaison with state agencies.
- State Department of Agriculture – Employs veterinarians and animal and plant scientists who can help assess the potential animal, plant, and food safety impact of a toxic release. State Departments of Agriculture oversee elements of food inspection and have authority to prevent movement of contaminated food products.
- State Department of Transportation—Assists and/or provides identification and containment of all materials on state highways and freeways or unincorporated county roadways.
- State Police or Highway Patrol—Provides general control of the perimeter of the incident (e.g., regulating traffic) and other roles depending on state law and incident requirements. In some states the Highway Patrol is the lead agency for hazardous materials spills on land transportation routes.
- State Department of Fish and Game and regional water quality control boards—Provide recommendations and guidelines when hazardous materials spills are likely to contaminate streams and/or waterways or would otherwise affect wildlife resources.
- State Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) personnel—Possess technical knowledge useful to an incident commander in the areas of exposure, protection, and control of hazardous materials.
- The State Department of Health—Employs health scientists who can help assess the potential human impact and food safety effects on animal and plant agriculture of a toxic release. State Departments of Health usually oversee elements of food inspection and have authority to prevent the movement of contaminated food products.
- State Department of Environmental Protection—Predicts the environmental impact of actions.
- State and local fire marshals—Provide specific expertise relating to chemical behavior and fire codes.

The Role of Federal Agencies in Hazardous Materials Spills

During a hazmat incident involving waterways or seashore the National Response Center (NRC), staffed by the U.S. Coast Guard, operates a 24-hour hotline to communicate notices of major hazardous materials discharges to the appropriate authorities. The NRC can also provide the local government with the expertise and resources of other Federal agencies. Examples include:

- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)—Primarily responsible for hazardous waste site operations, cleanup activities, and environmental impact.
- 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.
- Department of Energy (DOE)—Primary responsibility in the hazardous materials arena involving radioactive waste generated by the nuclear weapons program or by nuclear reactors that supply energy.
- Department of Defense (DOD)—Responsible for maintaining personnel, equipment, and other resources for potential use in military conflict. DOD manufactures, stores, and discards the full range of hazardous materials and is also one of the nation’s largest shippers of such materials. The DOD can also provide response teams and equipment.
- OSHA—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.
- 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.
- FEMA—Available to provide additional financial relief in the event of an incident so serious that local and state funds prove inadequate.
- The U.S. Department of Agriculture Food Safety Inspection Service—Oversees food inspection for human safety, including carcasses that may have been exposed to hazardous materials.
- The U.S. Coast Guard has authority over all coastlines and any waterways that drain into the ocean.