

EMERGENCY! CHEMTREC HELPS COPE WITH CRISIS

Industry's round-the-clock emergency service gives immediate information to those on the scene of an accident. Response teams provide expert assistance.

‘In March 1980, the Department of Transportation officially recognized CHEMTREC as the central emergency response service for dealing with incidents involving the transportation of hazardous materials.’

On an icy December morning, a tank truck loaded with sulfuric acid took evasive action to avoid a skidding motorcyclist. The result was an overturned truck and an injured driver.

A young mechanic, en route to work, stopped to assist. The driver appeared to be in shock, but insisted that someone report the accident to a toll-free "800" telephone number. Not really knowing why, the young man called.

He reached CHEMTREC, the Chemical Transportation Emergency Center in Washington, D.C. Within a few minutes, a CHEMTREC communicator had contacted the local sheriff with information on sulfuric acid and had notified the shipper's home office.

Established by the Chemical Manufacturers Association in 1971, CHEMTREC is designed to provide immediate information to carriers and public safety officials facing a chemical transportation emergency. By the end of 1979, it had handled about 100,000 telephone calls of which about 33,000 involved emergencies. More than 13,300 of those were transportation emergencies, about 85 percent rail or truck.

CHEMTREC communicators, on duty around the clock, work from a file of more than 35,000 product listings to provide immediate information to those at the scene of the emergency.

Drawing on an equally comprehensive file of telephone numbers, the communicator then notifies the shipper who can provide additional, expert advice and, if

needed, on-the-spot assistance.

Since its purpose is emergency assistance, CHEMTREC's help is not limited to incidents involving products of CMA members. More than 25 percent of its emergency assistance has been on nonmember shipments.

Many chemical shippers routinely put CHEMTREC's telephone number on bills of lading covering shipments of hazardous materials. In addition, availability of CHEMTREC and its 24-hour number are publicized to police and fire departments and Poison Control Centers across the country.

TRAINING PEOPLE TO HANDLE EMERGENCIES

CHEMTREC's role is growing. In a series of regional workshops, leaders of emergency response teams get "hands-on" experience in what to do at the scene of an accident. Participants in workshops practice using protective clothing and equipment, patching tanks and drums and cleaning up chemical spills. By the end of 1979, more than 800 trainers completed the seminars and were back in their own organizations training others.

Many companies have developed such response teams to help handle incidents involving their shipments. If circumstances warrant, a team, trained and equipped to help, can be dispatched to the scene within a brief period.

Producers of some especially hazardous materials have banded together into mutual-aid systems; the

Emergency service personnel, such as this fireman, can get quick information on the nature of chemicals involved in accidents from CHEMTREC, the chemical industry's round-the-clock emergency information service. CHEMTREC communicators have information on more than 35,000 chemical products at their fingertips.

