

The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has produced a three-volume series entitled ***Managing Hazardous Materials Incidents***. The series is designed to assist emergency response and health care professionals plan for and respond to hazardous material emergencies.

Volume I Emergency Medical Systems: A Planning Guide for the Management of Contaminated Patients.

Volume II Hospital Emergency Departments: A Planning Guide for the Management of Contaminated Patients.

Volume III Medical Management Guidelines for Acute Chemical Exposures.

Volumes I and II are planning guides to assist first responders and hospital emergency department personnel in planning for incidents that involve hazardous materials.

Volume III is a guide for health care professionals who treat persons who have been exposed to hazardous materials.

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Introduction

The presence of hazardous materials or toxic chemicals at an incident location or other emergency situation adds a new dimension of risk to those handling and treating casualties. The fundamental difference between a hazardous materials incident and other emergencies is the potential for acute risk from contamination to both patient and responder. In some cases, traditional practices must be altered to avoid compounding a critical situation.

Emergency medical services (EMS) must protect their personnel on-site and en route to the hospital, and other people within the hospital, while providing the best care for the chemically contaminated patient. **This guide is intended to help emergency medical services plan for incidents that involve hazardous materials and improve their ability to respond to these incidents appropriately.**

To ensure appropriate and timely patient care, as well as optimal worker protection, emergency personnel must have an understanding of decontamination procedures and personal protective equipment that they do not generally receive in the course of their routine professional training. They should also be aware of community resources that could be called upon to assist in emergency response.

Current training curricula for emergency physicians, nurses, and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) often do not adequately prepare these professionals to either manage the contaminated individual or decontaminate patients exposed to toxic substances. High-quality, specific, and concise guidance is needed to describe appropriate procedures to be followed by emergency medical personnel to safely care for a patient, as well as to protect responders, equipment, hospital personnel, and others from risk of exposure. In response to this need, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) has contracted for the production of two documents: (i) Emergency Medical Services: A Planning Guide for the Management of Contaminated Patients and (ii) Hospital Emergency Departments: A Planning Guide for the Management of Contaminated Patients. The second document is designed for use by emergency department personnel to minimize their risks of exposure within the emergency department and to provide for the safe and effective treatment of chemically contaminated patients.

This guide for emergency response personnel is designed to familiarize readers with the concepts, terminology, and key considerations that affect the management of incidents of chemical contamination. It has been developed not only to present uniform guidance for emergency care of chemically contaminated patients, but also to provide basic information critical to advance planning and implementation of emergency medical services strategies. It is intended to illustrate the characteristics of hazardous

materials incidents that mandate modifications to traditional emergency response, and the preparatory actions that should be taken to respond effectively to hazardous materials incidents.

All community emergency response systems and hospitals may not be prepared to respond to a hazardous chemical incident to the same degree. This document may be used to assess capabilities with respect to potential community hazards, and to develop response plans using national and community-specific resources. Worker safety and training are also key factors in effective management of medical emergencies, and this document is also intended to provide source material for developing local training and safety protocols.

Section I, *Emergency Medical Services Response to Hazardous Materials Incidents*, outlines general principles for hazard recognition, chemical exposure, and personal protective equipment. In addition, the hazard recognition section presents generalized guidance for determining whether a given situation constitutes a hazardous materials incident and details various hazardous materials classification systems. Basic toxicological and chemical terminology that emergency personnel need to effectively conduct patient assessments is presented, as well as an outline of personal protective equipment such as respiratory devices and protective clothing.

Section II, *Response and Patient Management*, includes guidelines for preparation and response to a potential hazardous materials incident. In addition, this chapter discusses patient assessment and decontamination guidelines.

Lastly, Section III, *Systems Approach to Planning*, details the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) guidelines for emergency preparedness and hazardous materials and waste programs. Government and private planning activities are also outlined, such as those established under the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act (SARA) Title III, the National Response Team, the Community Awareness Emergency Response (CAER) program, and the Chemical Emergency Preparedness Program (CEPP). This chapter discusses the need for hazard identification and risk analysis pertaining to hazardous materials located in the community or that could be a threat to the community given existing transportation routes.

Although this guidance document has been developed to provide for the safety of responders, as well as the needs of patients, it is not all-encompassing. Supplemental material that is vital to successful response to hazardous materials contamination is cited within the document. These supplementary materials should be reviewed before preparing any strategic plans or before conducting training exercises on this topic. This document cannot be regarded as a substitute for comprehensive instruction and training for hazardous materials incidents.