

2. Selecting and Organizing the Planning Team

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the selection and organization of the team members who will coordinate hazardous materials planning. The guidance stresses that successful planning requires community involvement throughout the process. Enlisting the cooperation of all parties directly concerned with hazardous materials will improve planning, make the plan more likely to be used, and maximize the likelihood of an effective response at the time of an emergency. **Experience shows that plans are not used if they are prepared by only one person or one agency. Emergency response requires trust, coordination, and cooperation among responders who need to know who is responsible for what activities, and who is**

capable of performing what activities. This knowledge is gained only through personal interaction. Working together in developing and updating plans is a major opportunity for cooperative interaction among responders.

(As indicated in Section 1.4.1, Title III of SARA requires Governors to appoint a State emergency response commission that will designate emergency planning districts and appoint local emergency planning committees for each district. The State commission might follow the guidance in this chapter when appointing planning committees.)

2.2 The Planning Team

Hazardous materials planning should grow out of a process coordinated by a team. The team is the best vehicle for incorporating the expertise of a variety of sources into the planning process and for producing an accurate and complete document. The team approach also encourages a planning process that reflects the consensus of the entire community. Some individual communities and/or areas that include several communities have formed hazardous materials advisory councils (HMACs). HMACs, where they exist, are an excellent resource for the planning team.

2.2.1 Forming the Planning Team

In selecting the members of a team that will bear overall responsibility for hazardous materials planning, four considerations are most important:

- ☐ The members of the group must **have the ability, commitment, authority, and resources** to get the job done;
- ☐ The group must possess, or have ready access to, a **wide range of expertise** relating to the community, its industrial facilities and transportation systems, and the mechanics of

emergency response and response planning;

- The members of the group must **agree on their purpose and be able to work cooperatively** with one another; and
- The group must **be representative of all elements of the community** with a substantial interest in reducing the risks posed by hazardous materials.

A comprehensive list of potential team members is presented in Exhibit 2.

In those communities receiving FEMA funds, paid staff may already be in place for emergency operations planning and other emergency management tasks. This staff should be an obvious resource for hazardous materials planning. FEMA has two training courses for the person assigned as the planning team leader and for team members -- Introduction to Emergency Management, and Emergency Planning. Another course, Hazardous Materials Contingency Planning, is an inter-agency "train-the-trainer" course presented cooperatively by EPA, FEMA, and other NRT agencies. Course materials and the schedule of offerings are available through State emergency management agencies.

2.2.2 Respect for All Legitimate Interests

While many individuals have a common interest in reducing the risks posed by hazardous materials, their differing economic, political, and social perspectives may cause them to favor different means of promoting safety. For example, people who live near a facility with hazardous materials are likely to be greatly concerned about avoiding any threat to their lives, and are likely to be less intensely concerned about the costs of developing accident prevention and response measures

than some of the other groups involved. Others in the community are likely to be more sensitive to the costs involved, and may be anxious to avoid expenditures for unnecessarily elaborate prevention and response measures. Also, facility managers may be reluctant for proprietary reasons to disclose materials and processes beyond what is required by law.

There may also be differing views among the agencies and organizations with emergency response functions about the roles they should play in case of an incident. The local fire department, police department, emergency management agency, and public health agency are all likely to have some responsibilities in responding to an incident. However, each of these organizations might envision a very different set of responsibilities for their respective agencies for planning or for management on scene.

In organizing the community to address the problems associated with hazardous materials, it is important to bear in mind that **all affected parties have a legitimate interest in the choices among planning alternatives**. Therefore, strong efforts should be made to ensure that all groups with an interest in the planning process are included.

Some interest groups in the community have well-defined political identities and representation, but others may not. Government agencies, private industry, environmental groups, and trade unions at the facilities are all likely to have ready institutional access to an emergency planning process. Nearby residents, however, may lack an effective vehicle for institutional representation. Organizations that may be available to represent the residents' interests include neighborhood associations, church organizations, and *ad hoc* organizations formed especially to deal with the risks posed by the presence of specific hazardous materials in a neighborhood.

Exhibit 2
POTENTIAL MEMBERS OF AN EMERGENCY PLANNING TEAM

Part A: Experience shows that the following individuals, groups, and agencies should participate in order for a successful plan to be developed:

- *Mayor/city manager (or representative)
- *County executive (or representative)/board of supervisors
- *State elected officials (or representative)
- *Fire department (paid and volunteer)
- *Police department
- *Emergency management or civil defense agency
- *Environmental agency (e.g., air and/or water pollution control agency)
- *Health department
- *Hospitals, emergency medical service, veterinarians, medical community
- *Transportation agency (e.g., DOT, port authority, transit authority, bus company, truck or rail companies)
- *Industry (e.g., chemical and transportation)
Coast Guard/EPA representative (e.g., agency response program personnel)
Technical experts (e.g., chemist, engineer)
- *Community group representative
- *Public information representative (e.g., local radio, TV, press)

Part B: Other groups/agencies that can be included in the planning process, depending on the community's individual priorities:

- Agriculture agency
- Indian tribes within or adjacent to the affected jurisdiction
- Public works (e.g., waste disposal, water, sanitation, and roads)
- Planning department
- Other agencies (e.g., welfare, parks, and utilities)
- Municipal/county legal counsel
- Workers in local facilities
- Labor union representatives (e.g., chemical and transportation, industrial health units)
- Local business community
- Representatives from volunteer organizations (e.g., Red Cross)
- Public interest and citizens groups, environmental organizations, and representatives of affected neighborhoods
- Schools or school districts
- Key representatives from bordering cities and counties
- State representatives (Governor, legislator's office, State agencies)
- Federal agency representatives (e.g., FEMA, DOT/RSPA, ATSDR, OSHA)

***Required by Title III of SARA**

2.2.3 Special Importance of Local Governments

For several reasons, local governments have a critical role to play in the development of emergency preparedness. First, local governments bear major responsibilities for protecting public health and safety; local police and fire departments, for example, often have the lead responsibility for the initial response to incidents involving hazardous materials. Second, one of the functions of local government is to mediate and resolve the sometimes competing ideas of different interest groups. Third, local governments have the resources to gather necessary planning data. Finally, local governments generally have the legislative authority to raise funds for equipment and personnel required for emergency response. Support from the executive and legislative branches is essential to successful planning. Appropriate government leaders must give adequate authority to those responsible for emergency planning.

2.2.4 Local Industry Involvement

Because fixed facility owners and operators are concerned about public health and safety in the event of an accidental release of a hazardous material, and because many facility employees have technical expertise that will be helpful to the planning team, the team should include one or more facility representatives. Title

III of SARA requires facility owners or operators to notify the emergency planning committee of a facility representative who will participate in the emergency planning process as a facility emergency coordinator. In planning districts that include several fixed facilities, one or more representative facility emergency coordinators could be active members of the planning team. The planning team could consult with the other facility emergency coordinators and/or assign them to task forces or committees (see Section 2.3.2). Title III of SARA also requires facilities to submit to the local emergency planning committee any information needed to develop the plan.

2.2.5 Size of Planning Team

For the planning team to function effectively, its size should be limited to a workable number. In communities with many interested parties, it will be necessary to select from among them carefully so as to ensure fair and comprehensive representation. Some individuals may feel left out of the planning process. This can be offset by providing these individuals access to the process through the various approaches noted in the following sections, such as membership on a task force or advisory council. In addition, all interested parties should have an opportunity for input during the review process.

2.3 Organizing the Planning Process

After the planning team members have been identified, a team leader must be chosen and procedures for managing the planning process must be established.

2.3.1 Selecting a Team Leader

A community initiating a hazardous materials emergency planning process may choose to appoint an individual to facilitate and lead the effort, or may appoint a planning team and have the group decide who

will lead the effort. Either approach can be used. It is essential to establish clear responsibility and authority for the project. The chief executive (or whoever initiates the process) should determine which course is better suited to local circumstances. (The emergency planning committee required by Title III of SARA is to select its own chairperson). Regardless of how the team leader is selected, it is his or her primary responsibility to over-

see the team's efforts through the entire planning process. Because the role of leader is so significant, a co-chair or back-up could also be named.

Five factors are of major importance in selecting a team leader:

- ☐ The degree of respect held for the person by groups with an interest in hazardous materials;
- ☐ Availability of time and resources;
- ☐ The person's history of working relationships with concerned community agencies and organizations;
- ☐ The person's management and communication skills; and
- ☐ The person's existing responsibilities related to emergency planning, prevention, and response.

Logical sources for a team leader include:

- ☐ **The chief executive or other elected official.** Leadership by a mayor, city or county council member, or other senior official is likely to contribute substantially to public confidence, encourage commitment of time and resources by other key parties, and expedite the implementation of program initiatives. Discontinuity in the planning process can result, however, if an elected official leaves office.
- ☐ **A public safety department.** In most communities, the fire department or police department bears principal responsibility for responding to incidents involving chemical releases and, typically, for inspecting facilities as well. A public safety department, therefore, may have personnel with past experience in emergency planning and present knowledge of existing responsibilities within the community.

- ☐ **The emergency management or civil defense agency.** In many communities, officials of such an agency will be knowledgeable and experienced in planning for major disasters from a variety of causes. One of the primary responsibilities of a community's emergency management coordinator is to guide, direct, and participate in the development of a multi-hazard emergency operations plan. In some States, existing laws require that this agency be the lead agency to prepare and distribute emergency plans.
- ☐ **The local environmental agency or public health agency.** Persons with expertise and legal responsibility in these areas will have special knowledge about the risks posed by hazardous materials.
- ☐ **A planning agency.** Officials in a planning agency will be familiar with the general planning process and with the activities and resources of the community.
- ☐ **Others.** Communities should be creative and consider other possible sources for a team leader, such as civic groups, industry, academic institutions, volunteer organizations, and agencies not mentioned above. Experience in leading groups and committees, regardless of their purpose, will prove useful in emergency planning.

Personal considerations as well as institutional ones should be weighed in selecting a team leader. For example, a particular organization may appear to have all the right resources for addressing hazardous materials incidents. But if the person in charge of that organization does not interact well with other local officials, it might be best to look for a different leader.

A response coordinator generally is knowledgeable about emergency plans and is probably a person who gets things done. Be aware, however, that a good response coordinator is not necessarily a good planner. He or she might make a good chief advisor to someone better suited for the team leader job.

2.3.2 Organizing for Planning Team Responsibilities

The planning team must decide who shall conduct the planning tasks and establish the procedures for monitoring and approving the planning tasks.

► A. Staffing

There are three basic staffing approaches that may be employed to accomplish the tasks involved in emergency planning:

- ☐ **Assign staff.** Previous experience in related planning efforts demonstrates the usefulness of assigning one or more dedicated staff members to coordinate the planning process and perform specific planning tasks. The staff may be assigned within a "lead agency" having related responsibilities and/or expertise, or may be created separately through outside hiring and/or staff loans from government agencies or industry.
- ☐ **Assign task forces or committees.** Planning tasks can be performed by task forces or committees composed entirely or in part of members of the planning team. Adding knowledgeable representatives of government agencies, industry, environmental, labor, and other community organizations to the individual task forces or committees not only supplements the planning team expertise and resources, but also provides an opportunity for additional interested parties to participate directly in the process.

- ☐ **Hire contractors or consultants.** If the personnel resources available for the formation of a dedicated staff and task forces or committees are limited, and funds can be provided, the planning team may elect to hire contractors or consultants. Work assigned to a contractor can range from a specialized job, such as designing a survey, to performing an entire planning task (e.g., hazards identification and analysis). A disadvantage of hiring contractors or consultants is that it does not help build a community-centered capability or planning infrastructure.

The three approaches presented above are not mutually exclusive. A community may adopt any combination of the approaches that best matches its own circumstances and resources.

► B. Managing the Planning Tasks

The monitoring and approval of planning assignments are the central responsibilities of the planning team. In order to have ongoing cooperation in implementing the plan, it is recommended that the planning team operate on a consensus basis, reaching general agreement by all members of the team. Achieving consensus takes more time than majority voting, but it is the best way to ensure that all represented parties have an opportunity to express their views and that the decisions represent and balance competing interests. If it is determined that a consensus method is inappropriate or impossible (e.g., because of the multi-jurisdictional nature of a group), the planning team should formally decide how issues will be resolved.

The team leader should work with the team members to establish clear goals and deadlines for various phases of the planning process. Progress toward these goals and deadlines should be monitored frequently.

Planning meetings, a necessary element of the planning process, often do not make the best use of available time. Meetings can be unnecessarily long and unproductive if planning members get bogged down on inappropriate side issues. Sometimes, when several agencies or groups sit down at one table, the meeting can become a forum for expressing political differences and other grievances fueled by long-standing interagency rivalries. For a team to be effective, a strong team leader will have to make sure that meeting discussions focus solely on emergency planning.

Another point to consider is that the team approach requires the melding of inputs from different individuals, each with a different style and sense of priorities. A team leader must ensure that the final plan is consistent in substance and tone. An editor may be used to make sure that the plan's grammar, style, and content all ultimately fit well together.

On critical decisions, it may be desirable to extend the scope of participation beyond the membership of the planning team. Approaches that might be used to encourage community consensus building through broadened participation in the process include invited reviews by key interest groups, or formation of an advisory council composed of interested parties that can independently review and comment on the planning team's efforts. Chapter 6 contains further guidance on consensus-building approaches.

The procedures to be used for monitoring and approving planning assignments should be carefully thought out at the beginning of the planning process; planning efforts work best when people understand the ground rules and know when and how they will be able to participate. The monitoring and approval process can be adjusted at any time to accommodate variations in local interest.

Planning committees formed according to Title III of SARA are to develop their own rules. These rules include provisions for public notification of committee activities;

public meeting to discuss the emergency plan; public comments; response to public comments by the committee; and distribution of the emergency plan.

► C. *The Use of Computers*

Computers are handy tools for both the planning process and for maintaining response preparedness. Because new technology is continually being developed, this guide does not identify specific hardware or software packages that planning teams and/or response personnel might use. Local planners should consult Regional FEMA or EPA offices (see Appendix F) for more detailed descriptions of how some communities are using computers.

The following list summarizes some ways in which computers are useful both in the planning process and for maintaining response preparedness.

- ☐ **Word processing.** Preparation and revision of plans is expedited by word processing. Of special interest to planners is the use of word processing to keep an emergency plan up to date on an annual or semiannual basis.
- ☐ **Modeling.** Planners might consider applying air dispersion models for chemicals in their community so that, during an emergency, responders can predict the direction, velocity, and concentration of plume movement. Similarly, models can be developed to predict the pathways of plumes in surface water and ground water.
- ☐ **Information access.** Responders can use a personal computer on site to learn the identity of the chemical(s) involved in the incident (e.g., when placards are partially covered), the effects of the chemical(s) on human health and the environment, and appropriate countermeasures to contain and clean

up the chemical(s). Communities that intend to use computers on scene should also provide a printer on scene.

- **Data storage.** Communities can store information about what chemicals are present in various local facilities, and the availability of equipment and personnel that are needed during responses to incidents involving specific chemical(s). Compliance with Title III will generate large amounts of data (e.g., MSDS forms, data on specific chemicals in specific facilities, data on accidental releases). (See Appendix A.) Such data could be electronically stored and retrieved. These data should be reviewed and updated regu-

larly. Area maps with information about transportation and evacuation routes, hospital and school locations, and other emergency-related information, can also be stored in computer disks.

State and local planners with personal computer communications capability can access the Federally operated National Hazardous Materials Information Exchange (NHMIE) by dialing (312) 972-3275. Users can obtain up-to-date information on hazmat training courses, planning techniques, events and conferences, and emergency response experiences and lessons learned. NHMIE can also be reached through a toll-free telephone call (1-800-752-6367; in Illinois, 1-800-367-9592).

2.4 Beginning to Plan

When the planning team members and their leader have been identified and a process for managing the planning tasks

is in place, the team should address several interrelated tasks. These planning tasks are described in the next chapter.