

# EMERGENCY RESPONSE REVIEW

Landstar Truck Fire, Stratford, Sherman County,  
Texas

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The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 6 is issuing this Emergency Response Review as part of its ongoing effort to protect human health and the environment by responding effectively to chemical accidents.

Emergency Response Reviews are designed to:

- Review with a local community and state officials the response procedures and outcomes to a specific chemical accident, affecting that community;
- Share information about chemical response safety practices;
- Develop potential recommendations and lessons learned to more effectively respond to an accidental release in the future;
- Build cooperation among local, state, and federal government agencies.

Emergency Response Reviews are entirely voluntary and may include all local, state, and federal entities involved with the response, as well as the responsible party and their representatives.

This document does not substitute for EPA's regulations, nor is it a regulation itself. It cannot impose legally binding requirements on EPA, states, or the regulated community, and may not apply to a particular situation based upon circumstances. This guidance does not represent final agency action, and may change in the future, as appropriate.

## SUMMARY OF INCIDENT

**O**n Wednesday, March 17, at approximately 6:00 a.m., a Landstar Truck caught fire at a service station in Stratford, Sherman County, Texas.

The cause of the fire was unknown but was believed to have started near the brake assembly (or bearing) of the rear wheels. The tractor trailer, which contained

approximately 25,000 pounds of Azoxystrobin, a fungicide, soon became engulfed in flames. The fungicide, carried in 1,000 pound supertotes, also caught fire. The driver of the truck was unsuccessful in extinguishing the fire with an extinguisher. However, he was able to provide the local officials with the shipping papers concerning the product.

City, State, and County personnel rapidly responded and determined that an evacuation of downwind residences and businesses was warranted. Approximately 800 citizens ultimately were evacuated. The evacuation lasted approximately 10 hours until the fire was extinguished at approximately 4:45 p.m.

Two State Agencies, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) and Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS), provided personnel to assist the local community in technical support during the cleanup operations, as well as traffic control during the evacuation and re-direction of traffic.

Landstar hired Ecological and Environmental Services of Amarillo, Texas, to conduct cleanup activities. The contractor brought in fill dirt to build berms around the trailer to catch any run-off liquid.

Once the berms were constructed, the Stratford Fire Department used a backhoe to break through the trailer and applied foam to suppress and extinguish the fire.

City Emergency Management contacted the chemical manufacturer several times to get technical assistance on response and remediation protocols.

TCEQ and EPA requested the cleanup contractor to conduct wipe samples downwind to confirm no residual contamination on houses or businesses.

The cleanup contractor then brought in roll-off boxes for collection of the waste material and truck residual, and completed cleanup of the soil impacted by the fire and chemical release.

## OBSERVATIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS

- ❑ The City of Stratford did an admirable job in handling the increased media coverage of this event. Appointing a Public Information Officer (City Manager) quickly for the event provided a settling effect on the media handling.
- ❑ Additionally, EPA commends the strong working relationship between the City of Stratford and Sherman County. The Sherman County Judge, Kim Crippen, Stratford City Administrator, Sean Hardman, and Stratford Mayor, David Brown, worked very well together during the incident to efficiently use all available resources.
- ❑ Stratford Fire Department Chief Eddie Williams is to be commended for his effective leadership during this response. His tireless efforts calmed the community, while ensuring that his own personnel responded safely and efficiently to the fire.  
  
EPA Region 6 recommends that Chief Williams involve more staff in the lesser activities during a response, so that he is not overwhelmed with response actions.
- ❑ During the incident, no formal command post had been established. This in turn created communication problems with other responding agencies, both State and Federal.

EPA Region 6 recommends that a command post be established during a large response, such as this. That command post should be centralized and manned continuously, so that all incoming response personnel and other logistical support will have a gathering point. Additionally, this provides a central area for individuals to receive assignments, report and to gather information, and eliminates duplication of efforts and reduces confusion at the incident and in the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

- ❑ The City of Stratford, with the Sherman County Sheriff Department, quickly diverted traffic around the fire scene, and was able to evacuate residences and businesses in a timely manner. However, a few untrained persons were able to gain close access to the fire.

EPA Region 6 recommends that a security perimeter be established immediately after the response begins, and that security perimeter personnel be provided with more detailed information on who is needed within the protected area, and that non-essential personnel not be allowed to interfere with response operations.

- ❑ City of Stratford Emergency Manager Sandy Williams reacted quickly to contact the fungicide manufacturer (Syngenta), as well as Info-Trac, to obtain response and health information on the fungicide. However, conflicting information led to confusion on the proper response procedures to the fire. The City's decision to let the fire burn was the proper decision, in light of the various pieces of information filtering in concerning the risks of the product.

EPA Region 6 recommends that local response officials determine a solid response strategy with a firm timeline, and potential alternates. While it is commendable that the local officials were concerned about potential contamination from the run-off fire water, protection of human health, including both citizens as well as responders, should always be the highest priority.

Whatever decisions are made concerning the response, local officials should be able to rationalize those decisions, and be able to provide that thought process to arriving State / Federal officials.

EPA Region 6 further recommends that State / Federal responding officials provide local officials with as much assistance as legally possible, when requested, to assist in decision making.

- ❑ During the review, it was determined that only Sandy and Eddy Williams have HAZWOPER training (both at the operations level) within the City fire department. This training had been conducted several years ago and there have been no annual updates to re-certify these individuals.

A first responder's first duty at any incident is safety, whether it is the public or emergency responders, this issue is always paramount. A way to ensure public and first responder safety is through training and exercise.

EPA Region 6 recommends any emergency responder who may respond to a hazardous materials incident should receive as minimum operations level hazmat training. All other individuals involved in the incident, including a mayor, city manager, county judge, dispatcher, etc, should be trained to the awareness level.

All levels of hazmat training are required to have annual updates that demonstrate competencies.

The following rules and standards detail these requirements and recommendations:

- Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) 29 CFR 1910.120 -- Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response (HAZWOPER)
- OSHA 29CFR 1910.134 – Respiratory Protection (Commonly referred to in the fire service as the Two In/Two Out Rule)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) 40 CFR 311 -- Worker Protection
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 471 -- Recommended Practice For Responding to Hazardous Materials Incidents

- NFPA 472 -- Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents
- NFPA 473 -- Competencies for Emergency Medical Personnel Responding to Hazardous Materials Incidents
- NFPA 1500 -- Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program
- NFPA 1561 -- Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management Systems

All emergency responders should be familiar with procedures on how to use an incident management system. Additionally, the leadership of the Fire, Police, Emergency Management, City, and County, could benefit from taking an Incident Command Class.

- ❑ The local Cable company does have override capabilities to conduct emergency broadcasts during an emergency situation. This system did not work during this emergency, and continues to be inoperable.

EPA Region 6 recommends the City and County work cooperatively to ensure that this system is brought back to service. This may include working with the Cable operator's parent company, or contacting State / Federal licensing commissions. This system is paramount in providing safety information to the community during an emergency situation.

- ❑ There are only eight members on the Stratford Volunteer Fire Department, with two of the members being the Fire Chief and the Emergency Management Director. Safety on the fire ground is highly dependent on the number of people at an incident.

EPA Region 6 recommends that steps be taken to increase the number of personnel on the fire department staff and that mutual aid agreements be updated and signed with the surrounding jurisdictions.

- ❑ During the event, a City of Stratford Public Works employee received a call from an unidentified TCEQ employee, inquiring on what type of assistance the City may need. This call caused some confusion within the EOC as to the nature of the call.

EPA Region 6 recommends that both State and Federal officials ensure that during an emergency situation that phone calls to the community be confined to those officials in the response structure who are in decision-making roles or designated alternate.

Overall, the response efforts by all parties (local, state, and the responsible party) are to be commended. Region 6 EPA hopes the above recommendations can be used to improve the response and preparedness readiness of the community if a future emergency occurs.