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## In this Issue:

- HOTZONE Conference
- NYPD Goes Undercover and Carries Out Chlorine Deal
- DHS regulations; reporting of information required under the EPCRA and Clean Air Act Section 112(r)
- Firefighters may have failed in several key areas



Training for Responders by Responders

Join Us for the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual  
HOTZONE Conference  
Houston, Texas ~ 16 - 19  
October 2008

### HOTZONE Conference 2008, information from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 6

During the 1990's, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Region 6 hosted a series of successful conferences throughout Region 6.

These 7 workshops brought local and state response / planning personnel together to work on hazardous materials issues. The first workshop was held in Denton, Texas (home to FEMA Region VI) in 1993.

In February, 1999, FEMA called a meeting in Dallas, Texas, of individuals affiliated with fire departments, law enforcement, state emergency management, and federal agencies to discuss the FEMA Hazmat Workshop.

Those attending were informed that the 1999 workshop, conducted in Baton Rouge, LA, would be the last workshop.

Those attending the meeting were unanimous in wanting to continue the workshop. FEMA and EPA Region 6 agreed to assist with the development and funding of a "new" conference.

(continued on next page)

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After several planning meetings, the present format for a conference was adopted and the name of the “new” Region VI conference officially became Hotzone on August 5, 1999.

The first Hotzone conference was conducted on October 11-14, 2000.

The conference was held in Fort Worth, Texas with the Fort Worth Fire Department being the sponsor.



The conference was a huge success, even with the hotel in the process of “minor remodeling.”

(For future reference, when you see a “Bobcat” front end loader in the registration lobby of your host hotel, this is not “minor.”)

And of course, this was after our first host hotel was destroyed by the tornado that slammed downtown Fort Worth in March, 2000.

This initial conference was attended by approximately 150 State and local responders, plus 24 exhibitors and many excellent speakers.

The high point of the conference had to be the Friday night “PPE Fashion Show,” which pitted varying styles of “protective wear” against each other. The winner, by a landslide, was the “New Year’s Look...”



Nothing more needs to be said on this topic.

But each year, Bob Royall and his team have scoured the nation to provide entertainment at the Friday night festivities, always outdoing the previous year.

In 2001 the conference was moved to Houston, Texas, with the Houston Fire Department as the host. The conference has continued to grow each year, as evidenced by the following chart.

Year	Vendors	Students	Scholarships Provided	Year	Vendors	Students	Scholarships Provided
2000	24	301		2004	45	377	78
2001	28	353	60	2005	44	343	76
2002	32	317	46	2006	39	480	128
2003	43	376	87	2007	42	544	147

Since its inception, federal, state, and local organizations have provided over \$ 300,000.00 in grant / contract funding to support Hotzone through scholarships and direct contract support.

The Steering Committee works year round to ensure the most effective training offered to the response committee, and is comprised of representatives from:

- Arkansas Department of Emergency Management
- Dallas Fire-Rescue
- Department of Homeland Security -- FEMA
- Department of Transportation
- Ft. Worth Fire Department
- Harris County Fire Marshal's Office
- Harris County Homeland Security & Emergency Mgmt
- Houston Fire Department
- Louisiana State Police
- LSU - Fire & Emergency Training Institute
- Oklahoma Department of Emergency Management
- Saint James Parish, LA OEP
- Saint Tammany Parish Fire Protection District
- TAS Environmental
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- Texas Dept. of Public Safety - DEM
- Texas Engineering Extension Service
- Texas National Guard - 6th Civil Support Team
- U.S. Coast Guard
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- Weston Solutions, Inc.

Each year, the committee is able to secure the nation's premier instructors to provide an outstanding array of training opportunities. As an example, during the 2007 Conference, this is the classes / training offered:

- So You Are the Incident Commander, Now What?
- NASA, JSC Tour
- Air Monitoring
- Houston's Petro-Chemical/Marine Industry Tour
- Intermodal Container Workshop
- It's a Good Day for Chemistry
- Tactical Use of Monitoring Equipment
- It Might Not Your Baby's Powder
- Liquefied Toxic Gases: Simple Methods of Reducing the Risk
- HazMat IQ
- Count for Fingers
- WMD Response - Operational Reality
- A HazMat Responder's Guide to Flash Fire Protective Clothing
- Monomers & Polymerization
- 3D Command
- If Oil Ain't Your Bag...Call For Help
- Incident Safety Officer
- Improvised Explosive Devices
- Radiation Incident Emergency Mitigation
- "HazMat HOTS" Hands on Training (Operations & Technician Level Training Props & Evolutions)
- Railcar Workshop (UPRR, TransCAER, Dow Chemical)
- A Little "Cyanide" Will Do Ya!!!!
- Level "A" -- Save Our Own
- Toxic by Inhalation
- Information Technology During HazMat Response
- Dealing with Heat Stress
- Mercury Ain't Just a Planet
- Ice for Dopes? - No, It's Isotopes!!!
- HazMat by the Numbers
- Operational Security
- We're From the Government and We're Here to Help???
- Research Laboratory Emergencies
- Highway Transportation Emergencies
- Fire Fighting Foam - Foam 101
- Hazardous Atmospheres & Confined Spaces

## HOTZONE AT A GLANCE:

**Goal:** Train and equip local, state and federal responders for safe, coordinated and efficient response to releases of hazardous materials which threaten public health and the environment.

**Target Audience:** Local fire, police, emergency management personnel, emergency medical services, health care providers, and state and federal response personnel who participate directly in the incident command system or in its immediate support at the scene of a hazmat response or terrorist event in Federal Region 6.

HOTZONE 2008: Will be held October 16 - 19, 2008 at the:

Houston Marriott Westchase Hotel  
2900 Briarpark Drive at Westheimer  
Houston, TX 77042  
Phone: 800-452-5110 FAX: 713-735-2727



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## NYPD Goes Undercover and Carries Out Chlorine Deal, *information from Tom Hays with the Associated Press*



Undercover NYPD investigators secretly set up a fake water-purification company last year to demonstrate how easily and anonymously a terrorist could purchase toxic chlorine on the Internet for a deadly chemical strike against the city.

A videotape \_ prepared for a counterterrorism briefing for private security executives scheduled Wednesday \_ discusses the threat and for the first time discloses the results of "Operation Green Cloud" \_ a reference to the yellow-green color of chlorine gas.

The purpose was "to assess the ease or difficulty with which a terrorist in the United States could acquire large quantities of chlorine without being detected by law enforcement or intelligence agencies," a narrator says on a copy of the video obtained by The Associated Press.

The conclusion: "At the present time, few if any barriers stand in his way."

There has been no specific terror threat against the city involving chemicals, but the NYPD recently put more emphasis on screening shipments of chlorine after learning that it has become a favored component of homemade bombs in Iraq. A 2007 U.N. report found that at least 10 attacks there involved explosives attached to chlorine canisters.



Chlorine typically is used as a disinfectant or purifier, and as an ingredient in plastics and other products. While routinely transported in liquid form, it can turn into a deadly toxic gas when exposed to air.

In remarks prepared for the briefing, Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly said that the NYPD has been lobbying the Department of Homeland Security to draft stricter regulations requiring chlorine vendors to verify the legitimacy of their customers.

The department sent federal officials a copy of the videotape and "asked them to include strict 'know-your-customer' rules," Kelly said.

Police stressed that the chlorine deal was within current regulations, which have no requirement that vendors verify identification of their customers or report transactions.

In the video, an intelligence detective describes how in June 2007 the department fabricated a construction firm, complete with a mailing address, Web site and a phony contract with the city to clean up a polluted creek in Brooklyn.

Investigators, after using the Internet to identify local vendors, used a credit card to place an order with one unnamed firm for three 100-pound cylinders of chlorine.



No one ever asked for identification and the purchase required little human interaction, police said.

The video includes surveillance footage of a truck delivering the canisters on a rain-slicked Brooklyn street lined with warehouses. At the time, hazardous material teams were on standby to respond to any accidents, police said.

The surveillance shows the truck driver and an undercover officer posing as the customer exchanging friendly banter as the delivery is made.

The driver "never asked for identification, he just asked for my name," the undercover officer says on the video. "I didn't feel he was uncomfortable or had any kind of concern."

## Potential for DHS regulations to interfere with reporting of information required under the EPCRA and Clean Air Act Section 112(r), *information from the Regulation and Policy Development Division Office of Emergency Management U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*

Discussion: Recently, several facilities subject to Federal requirements under the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act (EPCRA) or Clean Air Act section 112(r) have attempted to withhold information required under those laws from EPA or State officials responsible for their implementation.



Facilities have cited nondisclosure or confidentiality agreements relating to implementation of the Department of Homeland Security's new Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS).



Regional offices should make every effort to inform covered facilities that nothing in the new CFATS regulations allows a facility covered under both CFATS and EPCRA or CAA 112(r) to withhold information required under EPCRA, CAA section 112(r), or any other previously existing federal requirement.

DHS' own regulations are quite clear on this point. In section 27.405 of the CFATS regulations (Review and Preemption of State laws and Regulations), it states:



...

"(1) Nothing in this regulation is intended to displace other federal requirements administered by the Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Justice, U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Department of Transportation, or other federal agencies."



In the preamble to the regulation, DHS further clarifies this provision, specifically indicating that CFATS has no affect on EPCRA, CAA section 112(r), and other laws administered by EPA:

"At this time, we, do not intend to displace or otherwise affect any provisions of Federal statutes, including the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act, 42 U.S.C. 11001 et seq., or section 112(r) and 114 of the Clean Air Act of 1990, as amended, 42 U.S.C. 7412(r), 7414, sections 308 and 402 of the Clean Water Act, 33 U.S.C. 1318, 1342, and section 104(e)(7) of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act, 42 U.S.C. 9604."

The regulation and preamble language are consistent with similar language contained in the statute authorizing the CFATS program (Public Law 109-295, Section 550).



At the headquarters level, EPA and DHS officials have had recent discussions to confirm that the current intent of the CFATS regulations remains in accordance with this understanding and that information required to be submitted under EPCRA and CAA Section 112(r) may not be treated as Chemical-Terrorism Vulnerability Information (CVI) for the purposes of EPCRA and CAA 112(r).

## CAMEO CORNER

### CAMEO Search:

What chemical has "straw" in its general description, is an "EPCRA EHS chemical" and has "78-97" in its CAS#?

### ALOHA Exercise:

At 2:34 am on March 8, 2007, a railcar carrying liquid VINYLIDENE CHLORIDE ruptured during a derailment. The railcar was 80% full when it left its point of origination and measured 20 feet long by 6 feet tall. The derailment occurred near Delmar Drive ~ 2/10 of a mile from Highway 59 in the city of Victoria, Texas.

The chemical is escaped though a 15 by 6 inch hole, which is 2 feet up on the side of the tank.

The puddle that is forming from the leak is not burning and the puddle size is unknown.

The buildings in the path of the cloud are single storied with sheltered surroundings.

The wind is out of the Northeast at 13 mph with a partly cloudy sky. The temperature is 63 degrees Fahrenheit with 78% humidity and no inversion.



What is the downwind distance of the TEEL-3 footprint for the toxic threat zone?

**ANSWERS:**

- Lactonitrile
- 339 yards

## Emergency Numbers for Spill Reporting in Region 6

Arkansas Dept. of Emergency Management	800-322-4012
Louisiana State Police	877-925-6595
New Mexico State Police	505-827-9126
Oklahoma Dept. of Environmental Quality	800-522-0206
Texas Environmental Hotline	800-832-8224
*****	
National Response Center	800-424-8802
EPA Region 6	877-372-7745
CHEMTREC	800-424-9300

# Firefighters failed in several key areas

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Tacoma firefighters didn't shrink from danger the night in February 2007 when a Tideflats worker accidentally released lethal chlorine gas.

Within 90 minutes after the first fire engine arrived, a specially trained, two-man team entered the gas-filled building and stopped the leak.

But what began as a carefully plotted mission was undermined by errors that injured firefighters and others and failed the primary objective of any emergency response: to prevent additional harm.



A News Tribune investigation, based on public records and interviews with experts and key firefighting personnel, concluded that members of the Tacoma Fire Department:

- Neglected to prepare for a wind change that put firefighters and others at risk.
- Failed to monitor concentrations of poison gas outside the chlorine plant until after firefighters were overcome.
- Did not keep respirators handy for immediate use.
- Ignored department policy stating that the incident command post and hazmat backup teams should stay in a "cold" zone, or out of danger.
- Failed to call for evacuation of the area near the leak until after firefighters were exposed. Although firefighters notified a few enterprises and asked police to block some streets, they didn't tell people to leave the Tideflats until hours after the accident occurred.



12 of the 25 people taken by ambulance to area hospitals that night were firefighters. Although everyone was treated and released, at least one firefighter was coughing up blood the next day. Some workers in the neighborhood complained about breathing problems for months afterwards.

In what appears to have been a cursory safety investigation, the state Department of Labor and Industries exonerated the Fire Department. The News Tribune uncovered problems with that investigation.

While the state didn't cite the Fire Department for wrongdoing, L&I inspectors did recommend that the department make procedural changes, such as more closely monitoring weather and air quality, and keeping respirators ready.

"Those firefighters should not have been exposed to chlorine," said Don Lofgren, an L&I industrial hygiene compliance supervisor who was in charge of a two-person team of safety inspectors.

## FIRE CHIEF BLAMES WIND

Tacoma Fire Chief Ron Stephens defended his department's efforts the night of the Tideflats chlorine leak.

If it weren't for a sudden change in wind direction, he said, firefighters and local workers would not have been exposed to the gas. Once the wind shifted, everything changed," he said in an interview Tuesday. "It's pretty hard to move operations at a moment's notice."

However, two internal documents cite lessons learned from the incident, signaling awareness that firefighters should have done some things differently.

"The men and women firefighters that were on the scene of that incident deserve credit for risking their lives and their well being and for solving the problems that led to the successful termination of that incident," Stephens wrote Thursday in an e-mail to The News Tribune. "I'm proud of the risks they took and the work they accomplished.

"The responsibility for any and all errors made and or the perception of any and all errors made rests on my shoulders. I willingly accept that responsibility."



Lessons learned are summarized in a presentation prepared last spring for training purposes by Battalion Chief Jim Zuluaga, who led the department's hazmat team and was himself overcome by chlorine.

In the presentation, Zuluaga stressed the importance of air monitoring and limits on access to the danger zone and said all firefighters should have had respirators ready.

He also called for more high-tech equipment and said firefighters should park vehicles with escape or retreat in mind.

In an interview last June, Zuluaga acknowledged that firefighters erred by parking their rigs facing downwind.

"You try to put the vehicles in a way you can leave in a hurry," he said. "We didn't take the time to turn them around."

Later, in an annual health and safety presentation, Tacoma fire officials reiterated Zuluaga's recommendations and added another:

"More closely monitor air/wind movement."

An attached note also stated: "Warm zone should have been much larger, at least to East 11th Street."



#### 'IT WOULD HAVE BEEN OVER'

In interviews with The News Tribune, other department leaders explained why firefighters took the actions they did.

Initially, firefighters assumed the Pioneer Americas plant would contain the chlorine, Zuluaga said. After firefighters plugged the leaky tank inside, they decided to vent the building. But as the gas drifted out, the wind shifted.

"You can't rely on the winds for 30 seconds," Zuluaga said. "We got a taste of that that night."

Even so, Stephens said he wouldn't second-guess firefighter decisions to hold off on calls to evacuate the Tideflats while firefighters entered the gas plant.

"If the wind didn't shift, the incident would have been completed," the fire chief said. "It would have been over. We wouldn't have needed to evacuate those businesses."

After firefighters were exposed, the priority was to rescue victims, Stephens said.

Then firefighters went through the neighborhood, banging on the sleeper cabs of semitrucks parked on side streets, firefighters said.



Before the two-man team plugged the leak, firefighters notified only a few businesses near the Pioneer Americas plant.

"The focus was downwind," said Capt. Dave Sherk, the initial incident commander. At that time of night, relatively few people are still at work on the Tideflats, he said.

In general, it's problematic for firefighters to urge people to leave the Tideflats, Sherk said. Some industrial operations are so risky that operators cannot abandon them. And people resent it if they are told to leave and it turns out to be unnecessary.

"There's no winning," he said.



As for the firefighters who were overcome by chlorine, Stephens said those who didn't keep respirators handy are themselves responsible for exposure.

That includes firefighter Mark Maderos, who was coughing up blood the following day.

"If he was in that close to the hot zone he knew full well what he was supposed to do," Stephens said. "The incident commander doesn't have time to evaluate everybody."



In a separate interview Thursday, Maderos said that although he had completed hazmat technician training just before the chlorine leak, he didn't fully understand the risk.

"There was probably some lack of experience and lack of judgment on my part," he said.

He left his respirator on a nearby firetruck because he mistakenly believed he could retrieve it as needed. As it turned out, he was overcome before he got there, he said.

Fire Department officials also believe additional high-tech gear could help in response to future accidents.

Assistant chief Tom Henderson said the department planned to buy additional chlorine monitors and was considering an upgrade to its portable weather station.

As part of a Pioneer Americas settlement with the Environmental Protection Agency, the company promised to buy the Fire Department two high-tech portable weather stations, four hand-held gas monitors, a thermal-imaging camera and two gas-tight protective suits.

#### 'A WIDESPREAD PROBLEM'

Large accidental releases of airborne toxic chemicals like the Feb. 12, 2007, event on the Tideflats don't happen often.

But officials at the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board, a nonregulatory federal agency that investigates the worst ones, said emergency responders frequently make mistakes.



"Among the accident cases we investigate, a deficient emergency response is more often the rule than the exception," Carolyn Merritt, chemical safety board chairman, told the U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Government Affairs Committee in April 2005.

"It's a widespread problem," said agency spokesman Daniel Horowitz. Typical issues include poor communication and lack of equipment, training, procedures and preparation, he said.



Independent experts say it's crucial to track airborne concentrations and the weather when responding to a chlorine release.

"You always have to be aware of your surroundings at all times," said Larry Aleksandrach, a former New Jersey fire chief and mutual aid coordinator who teaches emergency responders how to handle hazardous materials. "The bottom line is you never want anybody to get hurt."

"Winds change," said Jim Lay, a U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board investigator. "That can require people to be adaptable and move out of harm's way."

Key elements of a safe emergency response to an accidental chlorine release are outlined in a video prepared for first responders by The Chlorine Institute, an Arlington, Va., trade group. It recommends vigilance:

"The constant monitoring of wind speed, condition, direction and of available chlorine levels is necessary to maintain the buffer zone and guide the containment process."

## Trivial Fun and Facts

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[www.epa.gov/region6/lepc](http://www.epa.gov/region6/lepc)

The average bed is home to over 5 billion dust mites.

Shirley Temple received 135,000 presents on her 8th birthday.

Only female wasps, bees, and mosquitoes sting.

Armadillos are the only animal besides humans that can get leprosy.

About 10,000,000 people have the same birthday as you.

Mel Blanc (the voice of Bugs Bunny) was allergic to carrots.

Everyone thought Albert Einstein suffered from dyslexia, because he couldn't speak properly until he was 9 years old.

There was one U.S. state that no longer exists? In 1784 the U.S. had a state called Franklin, named after Benjamin Franklin. But four years later, it was incorporated into Tennessee.

The magic word 'Abracadabra' was originally intended for the specific purpose of curing hay fever.