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REGION 6 LEPC UPDATE

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In this issue, we cover chemical incidents from schools, as well as issuing our annual Region 6 accidental release report.

- Steve and Hilary

We Need Your Help

We are looking at updating our Regional LEPC Handbook, which we first issued in 2005...

Two sections we want to focus on are:

1. Funding of LEPCs: Specifically, does your LEPC receive funding for its activities (e.g., industry donations, fees for Tier II filings, support from local governments, etc). If you do receive funding, what is the funding used for (outreach, exercises, etc.)
2. If your LEPC is active (we sure hope so !!), what secrets have you learned help keep your LEPC functioning (e.g., scheduling of meeting times, providing food). We always have LEPCs attempting to get re-started or keep active; any tips we can provide them would be useful.

Just email me at: mason.steve@epa.gov

with any information we can use in the Handbook covering the two topics above. Your information may help another LEPC stay active and functioning.

Chemical Incidents in Schools: Are You Prepared for “Unplanned Experiments?” from Region 8 EPA

Unexpected chemical releases, whether in schools or elsewhere, rarely occur on a convenient day or time. The federal Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) conducts national public health surveillance of chemical incidents through its Hazardous Substances Emergency Events Surveillance (HSEES) system.

ATSDR conducted an analysis of HSEES data for 2002-2007. During that period, 423 chemical incidents in elementary and secondary schools were reported by 15 participating states. Mercury was the most common chemical released.

The analysis found that 62% of reported chemical incidents at elementary and secondary schools resulted from human error (i.e., mistakes in the use or handling of a substance), and 30% of incidents resulted in at least one acute injury. Proper



chemical use and management (e.g., keeping an inventory and properly storing, labeling, and disposing of chemicals) is essential to protect school building occupants. Additional education directed at raising awareness of the possible problems and providing resources to reduce the risk is needed to ensure that schools are safe from potential dangers posed by hazardous chemicals.

The consequences for these releases in schools can be great and may be carried over to the home environment. Additional monetary costs and time lost in careful cleanup of these unexpected chemical events cannot be properly accounted as these types of incidents in schools are probably under-reported.

Failure to report may be due, in part, to the small quantities of chemicals involved (for example the small amount of mercury in a thermometer). The common factors that are often the underlying causes of chemical incidents and injuries in schools:



- Improper chemical storage
- Unsafe handling practices
- Improper application of standard workplace procedures
- Equipment failure (i.e., broken containers, hoses, or pipes).

Prepare Ahead to Prevent Chemical Incidents and Exposures

These four strategies and prevention practices may control many preventable chemical events.

1. Identify places where chemical health and safety incidents might occur on your school's campus such as:

- Store rooms
- Custodial closets
- Kitchens
- Nurses' offices
- Swimming pools
- Science and art classrooms
- Motor pools (bus barns)
- Vocational and agricultural shops



2. Develop and follow appropriate health and safety training and worksite practices for staff/students who use chemicals:

- Store hazardous chemicals securely, in well-ventilated and lit areas; and, in tightly closed, properly labeled containers.
- Avoid the combination of incompatible chemicals (For example, do not store alphabetically).
- Avoid the use of flammable chemicals near open ignition sources (i.e. furnaces and space heaters) or damaged electrical outlets and wiring.
- Perform periodic maintenance checks on vessels and equipment that contain hazardous chemicals (Look for unexpected crystallization in bottles, or bulging containers).



3. **Develop and distribute campus-specific contingency plans; then, train staff and students on emergency practices and procedures for chemical events, such as:**
- Practice evacuation and “shelter-in-place” drills with faculty
 - Compile chemical event notebooks with emergency checklists and phone contacts, chemical inventories and material safety data sheets (MSDS).
 - Designate lead staff to serve as monitors who would be responsible for making sure everyone under their charge follows the appropriate evacuation procedures.
4. **Develop, communicate and implement preventative policies and practices with chemicals on school grounds to:**
- Ensure that proper ventilation practices are considered when chemicals like pesticides, paints, and floor strippers are applied.
 - Identify and properly dispose of waste or derelict chemicals that have been in storage for an unknown period of time.
 - Enforce policies on improper possession or use of chemicals when observed on school grounds; common items may include liquid mercury, pepper spray, or cans of spray paint.
 - Substitute equipment that does not use mercury when replacement purchases are made; such as thermometers, blood pressure cuffs, or electrical equipment.

Another important factor with school safety is the potential for chemical/flammable risks outside of the school. School administrators should consider information that is available through GIS mapping tools and Tier II reports that would contain important information to assess potential environmental threats to schools.

For more information on accessing Tier II reports, please contact the State Emergency Response Commission (SERC) contact for your state. You can find out who your SERC contact is on page of this newsletter.



Resources:

Additional information and resource materials for schools are available from the federal government’s Environmental Protection Agency, such as the Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Kit <http://www.epa.gov/schools/toolkit.html>

or the Healthy School Environments Assessment Tool www.epa.gov/schools/healthyse

EPA Region 6 Accidental Release Information: 1982 - 2013

Thirty Years of Release / Spill Information

*** To view the full 2013 Region 6 emergency response notifications, please review the attachment to this newsletter, titled ANNUAL ACCIDENTAL RELEASE REPORT - 2013.pdf, or email a document request to mason.steve@epa.gov.**

Emergency Response Numbers

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	866-372-7745
CHEMTREC	800-424-9300

State EPCRA / LEPC Coordinators

Arkansas	Kenny Harmon	501-683-6700	kenny.harmon@adem.arkansas.gov
Louisiana	Gene Dunegan	225-925-6113	gene.dunegan@dps.la.gov
New Mexico	Daniela Bowman	505-476-0617	daniela.bowman@state.nm.us
Oklahoma	Tom Bergman Bonnie McKelvey	405-702-1013 405-521-2481	tom.bergman@deq.ok.gov bonnie.mckelvey@oem.ok.gov
Texas	Bernardine Zimmerman Chase Yarbrough	800-452-2791 512-424-2447	Bernardine.zimmerman@dshs.state.tx.us chase.yarbrough@dps.texas.gov



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