

LEPC ACTIVITIES

To satisfy the letter of the law, LEPCs need only to do what is listed in the section of this book about duties and responsibilities. But there is much more that needs to be done. Often, LEPCs are the only conduit in the county for issues concerning hazardous materials, which are a focal point for county or municipal government, industry, schools, and concerned citizens. Indeed, LEPCs can do much to safeguard the health and welfare of the citizens within their jurisdiction by undertaking projects or activities that enhance the public awareness of, and government's capability to respond to, hazardous materials incidents.

The following is a list of activities that LEPCs across the state have undertaken, often at little cost, but all with large benefits. Also these projects are eligible for partial or full funding under the SCEMD managed Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) federal grant program. The list of activities noted below is not all-inclusive, but does provide examples of useful projects.

Preparedness Activities

LEPC sponsored exercises: This is a good way to satisfy SCEMD exercise requirements while enhancing county or municipal hazmat response capability. Does not need to have a complex scenario to be challenging, but should have elements of; hazardous materials release with injuries to exercise the alert & warning; fire and HazMat Team rescue, law enforcement, emergency medical, county communications, county Emergency Operations Center (EOC) operations, evacuation, sheltering, and Incident Command capabilities.

Hazards/Vulnerability/Capability Assessments: In its simplest form, a way to find out what/where the hazmat threat is, who is vulnerable, and what capability exists to respond to an incident. Can be as simple or complicated.

Hazard/Threat Assessment: Includes local industry required to report under EPCRA, propane facilities, bulk fuel storage facilities, and other fixed facilities. Also, don't forget about the transportation related threats traveling along roads, railroads, and airports plot them on a map, determine the most hazardous chemical at that location, and what the worst case effects are of a release of that chemical. Then draw a circle around that facility equal to a distance of chemical "plume" or other effect like a blast shock wave would travel.

Vulnerability Assessment: Look at census data, or other information available to the county to determine who and what lies within the vulnerability circles noted above. Look

for any special cases like schools, nursing homes, shopping malls, as well as neighborhood populations.

Capability Assessment: Look at what the jurisdiction has to respond to the threat, Look at not only county or municipal assets like fire departments, HazMat teams, law enforcement, emergency medical and other government owned assets, but also private industry may have response teams or equipment. Plot these on the hazards map.

Once all the plotting is completed, look at the whole picture to find any deficiencies in response. Then make plans to fix them.

Hazardous Materials Commodity Flow Studies: This is conducted to provide detailed information about the type, quantity, volume, and spatial distribution of hazardous materials traveling through your counties by over-the-road carriers and rail. This information is necessary for detailed emergency planning activities by your county's emergency response agencies. The first step is determining the routes to be studied. This can be a major highway through the county or city, or a heavily traveled road through high population areas. Railroad studies are also useful since they often run through high population areas and city centers. The second step is developing a survey schedule that covers different days of the week, different times of day, and over a long enough period of time to ensure peak and off-peak traffic. The third step is to determine what methods you will use to collect the information. You can have teams stationed in safe locations along the routes using binoculars for placard surveys. You can also use vehicle manifest surveys, and train car manifest surveys. The fourth step is conducting the survey and compiling all of the information showing what types of hazardous materials, the quantities, frequencies and locations of where they are transported. A vulnerability study could also be done along your routes to determine what populations are at risk.

Facility Surveys/Visits: A program whereby LEPC members visit facilities to determine specifically where hazardous materials are located at the site, what response capabilities the facility has, access and exit routes, etc. Particularly useful if members of the fire department servicing that facility participate. Also, facility surveys are useful to determine if that facility must report under EPCRA requirements.

Hazardous Materials Reference Libraries: Acquire and maintain reference materials concerning hazardous materials. Such publications as the NIOSH series of chemical guides handbooks of reactive chemicals, chemical desk references, NFPA HazMat Response Guidebooks, as well as many others provide an excellent reference source for your fire departments or HazMat team.

Establish and Maintain a Tier II Data Base: One EPCRA requirement is that LEPCs must be that repository for chemical reports (Tier II forms in South Carolina) provided by those facilities who are required to report their holdings. A useful project is to keep an automated database of these reports which enables quick reference in case of an incident. The new CAMEO (Computer-Aided Management of Emergency Operations) software can be downloaded from the following website of the EPA's Emergency Management: <http://www.epa.gov/emergencies/content/cameo/index.htm>.

LEPC Sponsored HazMat Training for Responders: Grant-funded training conducted in county locations for fire, EMS, law enforcement, and other response forces. Courses consist of Awareness, Operations, and Technician level training in hazardous materials response, incident command, chemistry, confined space rescue, and many more, Course list and request forms are contained in the annual grant application package sent by SCEMD to each LEPC. Contact the SCEMD training branch for more information. Nothing provides a quicker hazmat payoff than training your response force.

Outreach and Information Activities

Public outreach activities equal preparedness activities in importance. The public also has responsibilities in hazmat response and they need to be reminded of what those responsibilities are, as well as informed of county/municipal hazmat capabilities. The following are some outreach ideas:

Brochures, Pamphlets and Videos: About what HazMat is, and the public's response to it, evacuation versus sheltering in place, HazMat around the house, including providing information to non-English speaking populations, etc.

Public Displays: Very useful during fairs and other community events. HazMat team demonstrations, equipment demonstrations and displays. Also a good way to distribute pamphlets and brochures.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs): Newspaper stories, and PSAs about LEPC activities, 'HazMat Tip of the Week' radio spots, etc.

LEPC Web Sites: An excellent tool to inform the web-browsing public. Can post LEPC meeting minutes, by-laws, brochure information, and links to other HazMat oriented sites. You could also provide industry with a useful tool by having a portion of the site dedicated to electronic filing of required EPCRA reports.

HazMat Amnesty Day: Sponsor an activity where the public can turn in hazmat or have it picked up. You might be surprised what the public has in their garages or storage buildings. Pesticides, explosives, and other dangerous substances are not unusual.

Group Presentations: Presentations to industry, civic organizations, school assemblies, nursing home staff, and many others are an excellent way of communicating the LEPC mission and HazMat specifics.

All of these activities are important as are many more not mentioned. Also, all the above activities are eligible for funding under the SCEMD managed US Dept. of Transportation Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) grant program. For more details, talk to SCEMD's HazMat Program Manager.