

Hazard / Definition

Hazmat Transportation Incident:

Uncontrolled release of hazardous materials during transport.

Description / Frequency

Transportation accidents involving hazardous substances occur when a vehicle carrying these materials is involved in an accident. Hazardous substances, because of their increasing use, are constantly being transported and these accidents endanger public health as well as the environment. Areas near major and secondary roadways, railroad lines, and waterways have the greatest risk of a chemical transportation accident. Hazardous material transportation routes have been designated throughout the county for transporting these substances.

Historical Score: 2

Numerous incidents involving the transportation of hazardous materials have occurred in the county, but most of those have been minor.

Potential Score: 3

Planning should be done to mitigate this hazard regardless of its moderate rating. The probability that an incident might occur is always present. Most chemicals are manufactured elsewhere and shipped to this area by truck, rail or air. In addition to major highways, the Union Pacific, Burlington Northern and the Denver and Rio Grande Railroads also pass through portions of Boulder County. The Cities of Longmont and Boulder both have small municipal airports.

Impact on Life and Property:

Transportation accidents that involve chemicals can produce extremely dangerous situations if they occur in or near heavily populated areas, or busy thoroughfares. Many times chemicals being transported are flammable, explosive or highly toxic. The ground, air, or water may become contaminated. Some chemicals that come in contact with the skin may cause severe and painful burns. Response operations can be extremely costly and burden a community economically.

Mitigation Options / Strategies

There are fewer mitigation measures that can be taken to prevent or reduce the dangers from technological hazards. Resources are not adequate to effectively prevent or reduce the impact of these hazards. Local, state and federal governments can provide some control through regulations and monitoring. Citizens need to be aware of these hazards and know how to protect themselves and evacuate safely if the need arises.

- C Boulder County supports SARA Title III Legislation, also known as The Emergency Planning and Community Right-to-Know Act. This is done through the County Local Emergency Planning Committee. This act requires facilities to make information available to certain agencies about chemicals that they manufacture, use or store at their sites.
- C Boulder County has a trained hazmat team that responds to hazardous material incidents in Boulder County. Training is done on a regular basis.
- C Routes designated for transporting hazardous materials.
- C The Boulder County Multiple Agency Coordinating System (MACS) group, consists of representatives from all agencies and jurisdictions within the County. This group makes plans and agreements for the procurement of resources needed during emergencies.
- C Public education programs that teach community members about the properties and dangers of hazardous materials which are regularly present in the community.

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C SCC Communications and US West partnered together for a warning and evacuation system for Boulder County. It is called the Emergency Warning and Evacuation Service (EWES) and is part of the Emergency Preparedness Network (EPN). The existing 9-1-1 database of telephone numbers and addresses is used in combination with detailed maps to help determine the geographic boundaries of an area impacted. The system is capable of calling up to 2,000 numbers in one minute. It is designed to deliver recorded information to endangered people in advance of a disaster or any major event. Messages can be delivered in various languages, as well as to pagers or the Emergency Alert System (EAS). Multiple floodplain areas can be handled during a single event with priority given to the area most impacted.