

Hazard / Definition

Hazardous Materials Incident - Fixed Facility:

Uncontrolled release of hazardous materials from a fixed site.

Description / Frequency

Major chemical spills can occur at any commercial facility that uses or stores chemicals. These include chemical manufacturing plants, water and sewer treatment plants, laboratories, shipyards, railroad yards and warehouses. California, the Gulf Coast, Great Lakes and mid-Atlantic States generate the largest number of releases. The Rocky Mountain and Great Plains States generate smaller amounts. Industry, when using chemicals, is responsible for operating as safely as possible.

Designated chemicals cover a wide range of toxicity and many have minimal or no effects on humans in small doses. Reporting of releases of chemicals is required under the terms of the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act of 1986 (also known as SARA Title III).

Historical Score: 2

Numerous incidents involving hazardous materials at fixed facilities have occurred within Boulder County. Some minor injuries have occurred from incidents, and evacuations of buildings on site have been necessary. No lives have been lost as a result of these incidents, and no large scale evacuations of people close to facilities have taken place.

Potential Score: 2

The Rocky Flats Plant, even though it is not located in Boulder County, probably poses the most serious threat for loss of life if a critical incident occurred at the site.

Boulder County has 17 facilities that fall under the planning process for the Emergency Planning and Community Right to Know Act.

Impact on Life and Property:

The probability of an incident occurring exists wherever hazardous materials are manufactured, used or stored. Releases of certain chemicals may represent an immediate hazard to a community and fires, injury, and loss of life can occur. Water, land and air can all become contaminated.

Mitigation Options / Strategies

Boulder County has a trained hazmat team that responds to incidents in the county. Exercises are conducted regularly for the purpose of training personnel for emergency response.

Transportation routes for movement of hazardous materials have been established.

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.

Emergency response planning and reporting requirements are mandated by the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act. This legislation requires facilities who produce or store hazardous materials or extremely hazardous substances to report to their local emergency planning committee and the State Emergency Planning Commission. The facilities also have to make available to the general public what chemicals they have on site.

The Boulder County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) was formed in 1987 and supports SARA Title III legislation.

Revised 2000