

Hazardous Materials

Hazardous Materials are all around us. Products containing hazardous materials are found in both the home and the workplace. In addition, they are shipped daily on our nation's highways, railroads, waterways, and pipelines. Hazardous materials in various forms can cause death, serious injury, long lasting health effects, and damage to buildings, homes, and other property. When used properly, many of these products are safe but accidents do occur.

What are Hazardous Materials?

Hazardous materials are chemical substances that, if released or misused, can pose a threat to the environment or health. These chemicals are used in industry, agriculture, medicine, research, and consumer goods.

Hazardous materials come in the form of explosives, flammable and combustible substances, poisons, and radioactive materials. These substances are most often released as a result of transportation accidents or because of chemical accidents in plants.

A major chemical or biological emergency can happen when hazardous amounts of toxins are released into the environment from a fixed facility, by motor vehicles, railroad or by air. You can be exposed to these toxins by:

- Inhaling them.
- Swallowing contaminated food, water or medication.
- Touching or coming into contact with contaminated items.



Many times you cannot see or smell anything unusual. In the event of a hazardous chemical or biological emergency, you will be given instructions on what procedures to follow by the authorities.

If there is a Hazardous Materials Accident

- If you see an accident, call 9-1-1 or the local fire department to report the nature and location of the accident as soon as possible.
- Move away from the accident scene and help keep others away.
- Do not walk into or touch any of the spilled substance. Try not to inhale gases, fumes and smoke. If possible, cover mouth with a cloth while leaving the area.
- Stay away from accident victims until the hazardous material has been identified.
- Try to stay upstream, uphill and upwind of the accident.



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