

CHEMTREC

WHAT IT IS

CHEMTREC, the Chemical Transportation Emergency Center, provides information and/or assistance to those involved in or responding to chemical or hazardous material emergencies. Established in 1971, it is a public service of the Chemical Manufacturers Association in Washington, D.C.

CHEMTREC operates in two stages: First, on receipt of a call providing the name of a chemical, it provides immediate advice on the nature of the product and steps to be taken in handling the early stages of a problem. Second, CHEMTREC promptly contacts the shipper of the material involved for more detailed information and appropriate follow-up, including on-scene assistance when feasible.

CHEMTREC operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week to receive calls on its emergency phone line. The number is widely circulated in professional literature and is distributed to emergency service personnel, carriers, the chemical industry, bulletins of government agencies, trade associations and others who may have need. It is *not* circulated in the public press. The public need is best served through the emergency services. It is vital that callers understand CHEMTREC is neither intended nor equipped to function as a general information source.

MODE OF OPERATION

While the Center's primary mission is to help in transportation incidents, it also provides support in chemical and hazardous materials emergencies in non-transportation situations.

Participating companies are requested to include the following on their shipping documents: "For Chemical Emergency - Spill, Leak, Fire, Exposure, or Accident, Call CHEMTREC 800-424-9300 day or night."

An emergency reported to CHEMTREC is received by the Communicator on duty. Recording details in writing, or on a video-screen, and by tape recorder, they question the caller to determine as much essential information on the problem as possible. This enables them to provide the best available information on the chemical(s) reported to be involved, giving specific indication of hazards, what to do, or what not to do in case of spills, fire or exposure.

Having advised the caller, the Communicator proceeds immediately to notify the shipper. The known particulars of the emergency are relayed, and responsibility for further guidance—including dispatching personnel to the scene, or whatever seems warranted—passes to the shipper.

Shipper notification is accomplished either by data transmission of emergency

information through computer link or by voice communication via a teleconference link. Companies receiving data transmission and voice communication has at their disposal the

system is also available for use by medical personnel treating patients exposed to chemicals. Consultation is provided by chemical company medical staff when the manufacturer is known.

The second stage of assistance becomes more difficult where the shipper is unknown. However, the Communicator has other resources. For example, on problems involving radioactive materials, CHEMTREC can call on the U.S. Department of Energy and State Radiological Emergency response plans for assistance.

CHEMTREC truly serves as the communication point for the entire emergency response system of the private sector and helps support that of the public sector. Many companies in the chemical and other industries have their own well-organized response systems. The chemical industry is constantly working to expand this capability and to assist others in planning theirs.

Identification of product and shipper is important to minimize time needed to provide necessary information and assistance. Shipping papers that accompany shipments for all modes of transportation are the best source of this information. If they are not available, rail, car and truck numbers and carrier names can be useful in tracing unknown cargoes.

MUTUAL AID

Mutual aid programs exist for many products. Here one producer will service

CHEMTREC teleconference bridge to bring on-line any needed additional chemical experts and personnel at the scene for expert advice on handling incidents. This teleconference

the field emergencies involving another producer's product. Initial referral may be in accordance with the applicable mutual aid plan, rather than directly to the shipper.

Arrangements of this sort are established on Chlorine, Pesticides, Phosphorus, Vinyl Chloride, Hydrogen Cyanide, Hydrogen Fluoride and LPG. CHEMTREC serves as the communication link for these programs. CHEMNET is a new mutual aid program that covers all other products not mentioned above. This program provides personnel at the scene of a Serious Chemical Distribution Incident (SCDI) with an on-scene product/equipment expert to serve in an advisory capacity. If requested, the on-scene expert will have the capability of providing hands on assistance.

RELATIONSHIP TO GOVERNMENT

While CHEMTREC is in the private sector, its capabilities have been recognized for many years by the Department of Transportation, and a close and continuing relationship is maintained between CHEMTREC and the DOT. Through the U.S. Coast Guard's National Response Center, the DOT is notified of significant incidents. Working closely together, the capabilities of both systems are enhanced.

BACKGROUND

CMA is a trade association of chemical manufacturers, large and small, representing more than 90 percent of the production capacity for basic industrial

chemicals in the United States and Canada. It has long been active in programs to improve the safety of chemical shipping containers, both package and bulk units, thereby minimizing failures and leakage of collisions and barge accidents do happen. Such emergencies deserve to be handled as well as possible to minimize harmful effects on life and property.

Emergency services—fire and police—normally are well-prepared to cope with common materials, including certain flammables such as fuel oil and gasoline. Too often they are at a disadvantage when chemicals are involved, especially since “what should be done” and “what should not be done” in the early stages may bear heavily on the seriousness of the incident. They need accurate, clearly understandable information to help them act with proper precautions.

The concept of CHEMTREC was first explored by the Chemical Manufacturers

contents under extraordinary stress. Such efforts continue unabated.

Nevertheless, despite precautions taken, train derailments, truck upsets and

Association in the mid 1960's following some major derailments. Officials of concerned federal departments approached CMA to determine what the industry could do to provide information to emergency services and carriers. After thorough consideration, the CHEMTREC concept was recommended and approved by CMA's Board of Directors in June 1970. The continuous and expanding operations since that time have confirmed the validity of the concept.

OTHER ASSOCIATIONS

CMA and CHEMTREC coordinate their programs with many other trade associations and professional groups. The Bureau of Explosives of the Association of American Railroads is involved in many rail incidents. Members of the American Trucking Associations and National Tank Truck Carriers are also major users of CHEMTREC. Groups representing manufacturers of other hazardous materials work with CHEMTREC in providing information in emergencies. This, and cooperation with emergency services, is essential in maintaining an effective program.



CHEMTREC can usually provide hazard information warnings and guidance when given only the NAME OF THE PRODUCT and the NATURE OF THE PROBLEM.

For more detailed information and/or assistance, or if product is unknown, attempt to provide as much of the following additional information as possible:

Name of caller & call back number
Location of problem
Shipper or manufacturer
Container type

Rail car or truck number
Carrier name
Consignee
Local conditions

“Limit calls to emergency situations only. Do not tie up the lines unnecessarily. The next call could be a true emergency.”

CMA

CHEMICAL MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION
2501 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20037
(202) 887-1255

This panel is designed to be photocopied and posted. The box containing the principal message can be cut out to wallet size.

FOR CHEMICAL EMERGENCY

SPILL, LEAK, FIRE, EXPOSURE, OR ACCIDENT

CALL CHEMTREC—DAY OR NIGHT

***800.424,9300**

Toll-free in the continental U.S.

Add long-distance access number if required

483-7616 in District of Columbia

For calls originating outside the Continental U.S.:
202-483-7616—Washington, DC, Collect

ALL CALLS ARE RECORDED