TNEC Training Helps Police Identify Hazards at Emergency Sites

Several years ago, a tanker truck rolled over on a traffic rotary in Lowell. In addition to the usual considerations of medical needs and safety, police officers were concerned about an unidentified liquid leaking from the truck's tank. Was it dangerous to breathe the fumes? What were the risks of stepping into the liquid to get to the truck driver? What distance from the liquid would be safe for emergency workers?

Police, often the first responders to an emergency, are faced with potentially hazardous situations. In February, a situation began to change, as members of the Lowell Police Department (LPD) participated in a TNEC Training course, delivered by The New England Consortium (TNEC) at UMass Lowell.

TNEC annually trains hundreds of municipal workers, emergency responders from industry, and others. They provide hazardous materials training and refresher courses to the 300 members of the Lowell Fire Department.

The LPD course helps officers anticipate the chemicals and hazardous wastes they might face at emergency sites. "Officer need to know the potential risks, what action is required immediately, and how to find more information," said Tom Estabrook, manager of training for TNEC.

The course was developed by Estabrook, LPD Chief Edward F. Davis III, and Charles Ouellette.

LPD's director of training. Twenty members of the department participated, including detectives, investigators, dispatchers, detention attendants, members of the traffic bureau, and Deputy Superintendent Kenneth Levallee, who is in charge of patrol.

"We wanted to include officers who are likely to face emergency sites and some of the personnel who can advise officers on what risks they might face," Levallee said.

Coalition Urges Use of Alternatives to Hazardous Chemicals

For those who fear that terrorists in the future might target facilities that use hazardous chemicals, there is a simple solution: Find safer alternatives.

That was the essence of one of Alasdair Stewart's recent environmental columns in The Telegraph of Nashua, N.H.

Stewart reported that Safe Hometown Initiative, a coalition of public interest groups meeting in Concord, had urged that local communities and the federal government persuade businesses to find alternatives to hazardous chemicals — rather than beefing up security around their facilities.

For example, the group suggested that sewage treatment plants use bleach rather than chlorine gas to sanitize water. The logic was that this would make the plants safer and also reduce the risk to the trains that carry chlorine to the plants.

Another chemical the coalition took aim at, says Stewart, was anhydrous ammonia, a poison with a range of uses from farms to power plants. As an alternative, the group suggested that the users substitute urea instead, processing it to release the ammonia when it is needed.

However, Martin Murray, a spokesman for Public Service of New Hampshire (PSNH), was quoted as saying that PSNH uses ammonia at its Merrimack Station to convert nitrogen oxide to its basic, nonpollut...
EPA Employee Charges 
Agency Downplayed 
Post-Sept. 11 Health Risks

Cate Jenkins, an employee of the Environmental Protection Agency's Hazardous Waste Identification Division has charged that, in the wake of the Sept. 11 attack, the agency "misrepresented safety levels and standards for asbestos" and failed to accurately detect possible health risks to the public.

In a 43-page memo, Jenkins alleges that the standards the EPA publicized as benchmarks for judging asbestos contamination in both dust and air were intended only to measure the presence of asbestos in building materials, according to a story in the Daily News in New York.

An EPA spokeswoman, Mary Mears, rejected the charges, saying, "We have a number of scientists in the agency who looked at Cate's approach and none of them agree with her view."

The Daily News story by Juan Gonzalez says that in the days after Sept. 11, federal officials repeatedly referred to two "standards," one for asbestos in dust and debris and another for asbestos fibers in the air. For dust and debris, the standard was one percent, and for air it was 70 asbestos fibers per square millimeter of a testing filter.

Gonzalez reports that in the first few days after Sept. 11 "around 35 percent" of samples taken were above one percent.

Moreover, Jenkins says in her memo that the one percent figure was not meant to be considered a health standard or even to be applied to measure dust. It was, she maintains, a way to gauge whether any building material such as floor tiles or pipe insulation contained asbestos and should be considered hazardous waste requiring professional abatement.

But any dust released by the breakup of such materials must be considered hazardous, Jenkins claims, because it came from asbestos-containing products in the Trade Center.

Joel Shufro, executive director of the New York Committee for Occupational Safety and health, agrees.

"She's absolutely correct. This is not a health-based standard," Shufro said. "People exposed to one percent or less can have significant exposure with adverse health impacts."

In response, Mears said, "We have never said it was a health standard. We're only using it as a guideline. We say clean up the dust and get rid of the dust regardless of whether it's one percent or below one percent — it doesn't matter."

One person whom Jenkins has convinced is Rep. Jerrold Nadler, D-Manhattan, who said, "A lot of New Yorkers have been exposed to very bad health risks, possibly even deaths years from now, because EPA put out these standards as if they had anything to do with health risks."

News Briefs

Congress and White House Debate Shift in Superfund Cleanup

WASHINGTON — Senate Democrats last month accused the Bush administration of dramatically slowing the pace of toxic waste cleanups under the Superfund program, partly to help relieve industry of much of the associated costs.

A Senate Environment and Public Works subcommittee summoned officials of the Superfund program to explain why the administration struck 28 sites from the list designated for restoration this year and why it shifted the bulk of the cost from industry to taxpayers.

"The Superfund program has made excellent progress over the years," said Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), chair of a Superfund oversight subcommittee. "Unfortunately, the most important parts of the program — the pace of the cleanup and the principle that the polluter must pay — are now under attack by this administration."

The Bush administration denies that its policy change is motivated by a desire to help chemical and oil companies and other businesses responsible for much of the toxic waste. Marianne L. Horinko, Environmental Protection Agency assistant administrator for solid
waste and emergency response, testified that fewer sites have been targeted for completion because the EPA is facing more challenging, costly "megasisalts" than the more routine projects of the past. (Washington Post)

Five Workers Injured in Chemical Spill

PORTSMOUTH, N.H. — Two workers were lifted by helicopter to Massachusetts General Hospital last month after a chemical explosion at Pease International Tradeport.

Three other employees were treated at Portsmouth Regional Hospital. Fire officials said the Lonza Biologics workers were transferring sodium bisulfite from one container to another when some of it spilled, burning two workers and releasing toxic fumes. The chemical was over-pressurized.

The two workers suffered first- and second-degree burns, but their injuries were not considered life-threatening, said Larry Thomas, director of operations for Lonza. Associated Press)

Chemical Is Found in Bourne Well

BOURNE, Mass. — A well supplying this town with drinking water has been closed indefinitely after traces of a chemical used in rocket fuel were suspected of causing cancer were found in the water.

While the level of contamination is barely measurable, military officials are concerned that the chemical perchlorate has migrated from Camp Edwards to water supplies in this town at the gateway to Cape Cod.

Perchlorate has been found throughout the camp, part of the Massachusetts Military Reservation. For decades, the base was used for military training.

The federal Environmental Protection Agency considers perchlorate a carcinogen. The chemical can affect the thyroid gland, which can slow metabolism, growth, and development. (Boston Globe)

Fall River Case Shows Flaws in State’s Toxic Waste Cleanup Law

FALL RIVER, Mass. — In the sizzling real estate market of 1998, it was all a middle-aged couple living on disability checks could afford: a vinyl-sided raised ranch close to power lines and a four-lane highway.

Maria and Bernardino Figueredo staked $50,000 on a down payment and turned the house into a home.

The ground beneath the house had been home to a century's worth of industrial companies using toxic chemicals. But the contamination had been cleaned up, the Figueredos were told, and the land had been certified for housing by the city of Fall River.

More than three years later, a routine state audit revealed a plume of potentially dangerous solvents in the ground. Driven from their home by toxic fumes, the Figueredos spent three weeks in a hotel and have hired a lawyer to sue the developer who sold the house.

The case exposes what critics say are gaps in the state's decades-old system for cleaning up contaminated waste sites, a system that has resulted in the redevelopment of 1,250 contaminated sites and been touted as a national model. (Boston Globe)

TNEC MANAGES FEMA LENDING LIBRARY OF VIDEOS

The Region 1 office of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in Boston has transferred its video lending library to TNEC. The library contains approximately 400 Hazmat/Emergency Response related videos and slides, covering such topics as:

- Hazmat Chemicals/Gases
- Hazmat Emergency Medical Services
- Hazmat Exercises
- Hazmat Firefighting
- Hazmat Health Issues
- Hazmat Incidents/Fires
- Hazmat Oil Response
- Hazmat Planning/Training
- Hazmat Terrorism

The library materials remain the property of FEMA. However, it will be stored at the TNEC training facility and managed by TNEC staff. You may view the catalog and request videos online by visiting the "What's New" section of our Web site:

www.uml.edu/TNEC

You may also request a paper catalog by calling us at 978.934.3277 or e-mailing us at tne@uml.edu

JUNE 40-HOUR HAZWOPER COURSE OFFERED IN MANCHESTER, NEW HAMPSHIRE

In partnership with the Keene State College Safety Center, the 40-hour Hazardous Waste Site Worker Basic Health & Safety Training on June 3-7 will be held in Manchester, N.H. Lunch will be provided at this course. Call us for details and to register, 978.934.3257

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The New England Consortium's Quarterly is a publication of the New England Consortium, based at the University of Massachusetts Lowell.
To receive The Quarterly at no charge, contact TNEC. Send letters to TNEC Quarterly at University of Massachusetts Lowell, One University Avenue Falmouth 202 Lowell, MA 01854. TNEC is a partnership between the University of Massachusetts Lowell and the Coalition for Occupational Safety and Health in CT, MA, NH and RI. TNEC provides health and safety training for hazardous waste site workers and emergency response personnel under a grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences.

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# TNEC 2002 Open Enrollment Training Calendar

University of Massachusetts Lowell, One University Avenue, Falmouth 202, Lowell, MA 01854

Phone: 978.934.3197, Fax: 978.934.2012 or 978.452.5711

[www.uml.edu/tnece](www.uml.edu/tnece) e-mail: tnece@uml.edu

All TNEC trainings are held at the TNEC Training Center, Wannamnecit Mills, 600 Saffolk Street, 5th Floor, Lowell, MA, unless otherwise stated.

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* This course will be offered in Manchester, N.H.

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