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The InfoGram

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CSB: West, Texas Explosion and Fire Final Report

The United States Chemical Safety Board (CSB) released its final report on the 2013 fire and eventual explosion of nearly 30 tons of fertilizer grade ammonium nitrate in West, Texas. This incident killed 15 people, 12 of them first responders, and injured 260 people. [Volunteer fire departments and all first responder agencies should view the final report and short CSB video on this incident](#) and reevaluate their response planning and the hazards in their jurisdiction.

The CSB found poor hazard awareness, inadequate emergency planning, and limited regulatory oversight all contributed to this event. In addition, the town of West was victim to something that is affecting many towns and cities across the country – residential creep. When the fertilizer plant was built in 1954, it was surrounded by fields. By 2013, the town had crept very close to it and zoning did not address the problem.

The CSB also found that, although the responding fire department was aware of the dangers of the anhydrous ammonia on site, they didn't anticipate the possibility of an ammonium nitrate explosion. The fire department also:

- Did not conduct a proper pre-incident planning for the site,
- May not have used the Emergency Response Guidebook or Material Safety Data Sheets,
- Lacked situational awareness, and
- Did not use the Incident Command System or National Incident Management System.

The CSB also found a lack of proper hazardous materials training. Both the training and pre-incident planning concerns stem partly from a lack of state and federal requirements for volunteer departments.

Relying on private companies or state and federal agencies to properly regulate and communicate hazards did not work in West, Texas, and any changes to the laws or regulations will take time. Becoming more proactive toward chemical threats or other hazards within your response area can be a life or death decision for members of your department.

(Source: [CSB](#))

Training Recommendations for 9-1-1 Personnel

A group of 17 national associations and state, county, and municipal public safety agencies teamed up to develop a set of [minimum training guidelines for 9-1-1 dispatchers and call-takers](#), and they are currently looking for the 9-1-1 community to comment on and review the proposed recommendations.

“[Recommended Minimum Training Guidelines for the 9-1-1 Telecommunicator](#)” (PDF, 528 Kb) outlines suggested minimum training for those new to the role of dispatcher or call-taker. Topics include roles and responsibilities; legal concepts; interpersonal communications; emergency communications technology; call processing; emergency management; radio communications; stress management; quality assurance; and on-the-job training.

These recommended topics are to be a foundation upon which agencies and employees can build in order to ensure consistent service and staffing across agencies and regions. Those interested in helping this goal by [reviewing and commenting on the proposed guidelines](#) (PDF, 349 Kb) can follow the instructions provided by the working group.

The working group also intends to develop model legislation to assist states in setting a minimum standard of training for the telecommunicators operating within the state.

(Source: [APCO](#))

Tactical Emergency Casualty Care Webinar

Those interested in incorporating medics into their tactical response teams or improving a team already containing a medical aspect should consider taking part in the upcoming webinar “Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) for the Whole Community.”

TECC, based on the military’s Tactical Combat Casualty Care, operates with the understanding that a paramedic or EMT, not a tactical medic, will be the medical responder during an incident like an active shooter. The program teaches things like hemorrhage control, surgical airway control, dragging/carrying techniques, and strategies for patient care when under direct or indirect threat.

In the webinar, the director of EMS and Operational Medicine Training from George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences will discuss TECC best-practices and how preparing for these types of events will bring increased resilience. Webinar details:

- When: Thursday, February 25th, 1:00 PM - 2:00 PM Eastern;
- Conference Number: 855 852-7677;
- Participant Code: 999963986509;
- Please register to attend at: <https://share.dhs.gov/essrdwsfeb2016/event/>
- Invited By: Emergency Services Sector – Sector Specific Agency (ESS-SSA) (essteam@hq.dhs.gov).

For those interested in TECC training or establishing TECC within an existing tactical response team, see [the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians’ on-site TECC training program](#).

(Source: [NAEMT](#))

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