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The U.S. Fire Administration maintains the **Emergency Management and Response – Information Sharing and Analysis Center (EMR-ISAC)**.

For information regarding the EMR-ISAC visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/emr-isac or contact the EMR-ISAC office at: (301) 447-1325 and/or emr-isac@fema.dhs.gov.

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CSB Preliminary Report on West Explosion

The Chemical Safety Board (CSB) released its [preliminary findings on the April 2013 West, Texas fertilizer plant explosion](#). A fire at the West Fertilizer plant caused a large amount of ammonium nitrate to explode, killing 14 people, injuring over 200, and causing extensive damage to the town.

The CSB states the safety issues and lessons learned from ammonium nitrate explosions have not been effectively communicated to the fire service and other emergency responders who may encounter such incidents. The CSB remarks that verbiage about ammonium nitrate events in the National Fire Protection Association codes and the Emergency Response Guidebook are vague and indistinct.

The investigation found a lack of proper codes to be a major cause of the severity of the incident. The supervisory investigator stated “The CSB found at all levels of government a failure to adopt codes to keep populated areas away from hazardous facilities.” They also found a lack of fire codes at the state level and a lack of a county emergency response plan for West Fertilizer to be contributing factors.

As the CSB continues the investigation, they also commended [The Fertilizer Institute](#) for the creation of ResponsibleAg, an auditing and outreach program for fertilizer retailers. Still under development, ResponsibleAg will also give recommendations for first responders regarding fires involving fertilizer chemicals.

(Source: [Chemical Safety Board](#))

Firefighter Safety Through Advanced Research

A new program managed by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) collects in one place the current research on the changing fire environment and dynamics. The [Firefighter Safety Through Advanced Research \(FSTAR\)](#) toolkit puts the information into usable, actionable methods for use by the fire service.

FSTAR collects current research on ventilation, wind effects, and changes in residential building fires. The many resources available include an Implementation Guide for fire leadership, a growing library, and access to training.

The FSTAR program aims to help the fire service rethink outdated and possibly unsafe practices. The program was developed from findings gathered during the

2012 workshop “[Changing Severity of Home Fires](#)” and was developed through a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

(Source: [FSTAR](#))

Free Online Course: Jail Evacuation

A [free online course on jail evacuations](#) created by Columbia Southern University is now available through the National Sheriffs’ Association (NSA) Center for Public Safety. Targeted directly to correctional facility management, the course provides information on the special considerations and difficulties of jail evacuation for law enforcement and emergency management personnel.

Of course, many things can trigger a decision to evacuate, including sudden emergencies (e.g., fires, chemical leaks) or events that can give the jail’s administration more time to act (e.g., some flood events). This course also covers Weapons of Mass Destruction, terrorism, and decontamination procedures.

The safety and security of inmates, jail staff, and the public should all be of concern when planning or managing a jail evacuation. Some things this course covers:

- Identifying mutual aid partners and other key resources;
- Finding appropriate remote site(s);
- Functions of the jail that should be re-established at the new site;
- Developing a plan to move the inmate population back to the jail;
- The benefits of testing a plan through exercises and full evacuation drills;
- Exercises to simulate the pressure and time constraints people may face;
- Debriefing all evacuation participants, including the inmates.

(Source: [National Sheriffs’ Association](#))

Leveraging Pharmacists During Emergencies

The [role of pharmacists in emergencies](#) and disasters is often overlooked. Many pharmacists work for private businesses, not government or public health agencies, and while their role is evolving, emergency plans can exclude the part community pharmacists could potentially play in a disaster.

The most obvious role of community pharmacists is during a national public health emergency that would require use of the [Strategic National Stockpile](#) (SNS), such as a pandemic influenza outbreak or an anthrax attack. In such events, pharmacists can work with authorities to fill hundreds or even thousands of prescriptions per day, administer vaccines, and distribute information to the public. Kansas provides an excellent [depiction of a state plan for utilizing the SNS](#) (PDF, 3.7 Mb).

Two sites can help the process. The Drug Store News Continuing Education Program offers the course “[Engaging Community Pharmacists in Emergency Preparedness](#).” It covers the work of pharmacists in recent disasters, patient scenarios, and offers a test for continuing education units (CEUs).

Another site, [Rx Response](#), has as its mission the uninterrupted supply of medicines during disasters. Developed as a result of Hurricane Katrina, they work to establish relationships and prepare before disasters strike. States interested in utilizing Rx Response in their emergency plans and operations are encouraged to contact them.

(Source: [CDC](#))

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