



FEMA

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## LESSON LEARNED

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### Emergency Management: Informing Hospitals about Hazardous Materials Found at Incident Scenes

#### SUMMARY

Emergency managers should review their standard operating procedures (SOP) to ensure that hospitals are promptly informed of hazardous materials found at incident sites.

#### DESCRIPTION

Pennsylvania Region 13 sponsored and conducted the Steel Hammer full-scale exercise (FSE) in conjunction with Beaver County Emergency Medical Services from September 14 to 16, 2007. Over 3,000 participants from 128 federal, state, regional, local, and private sector organizations participated in the FSE. The FSE tested a broad scope of response capabilities across multiple jurisdictional levels and agencies. The FSE scenario included the dispersion of liquid chlorine by a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device and the dissemination of anthrax in three separate locations. One FSE objective was to demonstrate the region's capacity to decontaminate victims.

The Pennsylvania Region 13 Task Force consists of 13 counties and the City of Pittsburgh in southwestern Pennsylvania. The Task Force provides the region with an all-hazards response capability.

During the FSE, hospitals lacked timely and accurate information about the specific agent of concern encountered at the incident scenes. Ambulances transferred exercise victims to medical facilities in multiple counties before the nature of the contaminant was determined. As a result, hospitals used universal methods to decontaminate victims. However, these methods prevented the hospitals from conducting post-decontamination surveys to verify the effectiveness of the methods. The Steel Hammer after-action report recommended that emergency managers review their SOPs to ensure that hospitals and first receivers are promptly alerted to the agent of concern once the agent in a hazardous materials incident is identified.

Emergency managers should review their SOPs to ensure that hospitals are promptly informed of hazardous materials found at incident sites.

#### CITATION

Pennsylvania Region 13. *DRAFT Operation STEEL HAMMER After Action Report*. 22 Oct 2007.

<https://www.llis.dhs.gov/docdetails/details.do?contentID=35104>

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