

#### RELATED TERMS

- Full-Scale Exercise
- Incident Site Safety
- Weapons of Mass Destruction



## Lessons Learned Information Sharing

www.LLIS.gov

#### PRIMARY DISCIPLINES

- Hazardous Materials
- Fire
- Emergency Management

## LESSON LEARNED

### Mass Decontamination: Scanning Victims for the Successful Removal of Contaminants

#### SUMMARY

Response personnel conducting decontamination operations should ensure that a hazardous materials (HazMat) team member with appropriate instrumentation is posted at the terminus of the decontamination line to scan victims for the successful removal of contaminants.

#### DESCRIPTION

On July 16, 2005, the Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, Department of Public Safety (WCDPS) hosted the Twisted Rail full-scale exercise (FSE). The exercise simulated a terrorist initiated explosion and the release of liquid chemical agents from a train car in West Newton, PA. The FSE provided participating agencies with an opportunity to practice key capabilities including weapons of mass destruction response, incident command system procedures, and the implementation of protective actions. Nearly 300 people from 48 federal, state, and local agencies participated in the FSE. Fire department and HazMat personnel conducted victim decontamination during the exercise.

HazMat personnel did not screen victims to confirm that they were sufficiently free of contaminants before releasing them from decontamination facilities. Many of these victims were subsequently loaded into Emergency Medical Services (EMS) vans and transported to area medical facilities for further treatment. WCDPS noted that potentially contaminated victims could have cross-contaminated EMS personnel, medical facilities, vehicles, and equipment following an actual chemical incident. The Twisted Rail FSE after-action report recommended that HazMat personnel screen victims for residual contamination during future incident responses. This can help ensure the safety of the victims and reduce the likelihood of secondary contamination.

Response personnel conducting decontamination operations should ensure that a HazMat team member with appropriate instrumentation is posted at the terminus of the decontamination line to scan victims for the successful removal of contaminants.

#### CITATION

Westmoreland Department of Public Safety, *Exercise Twisted Rail: After-Action Report*, Westmoreland County, PA. 2005.

[https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content\\_id=24616](https://www.llis.dhs.gov/member/secure/detail.cfm?content_id=24616)

**DISCLAIMER**

*Lessons Learned Information Sharing (LLIS.gov)* is the US Department of Homeland Security/Federal Emergency Management Agency's national online network of lessons learned, best practices, and innovative ideas for the emergency response and homeland security communities. The Web site and its contents are provided for informational purposes only, without warranty or guarantee of any kind, and do not represent the official positions of the US Department of Homeland Security. For more information on *LLIS.gov*, please email [Feedback@llis.dhs.gov](mailto:Feedback@llis.dhs.gov) or visit [www.llis.gov](http://www.llis.gov).