

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

(INCORPORATING CHEMICAL, BIOLOGICAL AND RADIOLOGICAL THREATS)

Hazardous materials are widely used and transported throughout Western Australia. Wherever they are used within the community, there is a risk of an emergency occurring. They include explosives, compressed gases, corrosive substances, poisons, radioactive materials, infectious substances and flammable liquids and gases.

As the designated Hazard Management Agency in WA, FESA has responsibility the management of emergency incidents involving hazardous materials (HAZMAT). These include chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) incidents – ever present threats in a changing global environment in relation to terrorism. FESA's Operational Services are responsible for development of the [State HAZMAT Emergency Management Plan](#). Because of the unique circumstances of chemical, biological and radiological incidents, a separate emergency management plan, *Westplan – CBR*, is being developed. This outlines the consequence management role for incidents involving chemical, biological and radiological materials. Generally, career and volunteer firefighters manage these incidents.

PREVENTION

The Western Australian Hazardous Materials Coordinating Committee – made up of representatives from government agencies, the community and industry – investigates all major hazardous materials incidents in the State with a view to preventing any recurrence of the cause of the incident. This proactive approach has resulted in Western Australia having one of the lowest incidences of hazardous materials emergencies in Australia.

PREPAREDNESS

INTER-AGENCY OPERATIONS

Part of the Asian Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum was held in Perth in February 2007. We worked closely with Western Australia Police to develop a response plan for potential incidents during the meetings. Risk assessments were conducted to ascertain the level of support required and a specialist FESA team assisted Western Australia Police at the meeting venue.

The multi-agency model developed in Western Australia was used as the standard for subsequent Australian APEC meetings.

The purchase of the Ahura Raman Spectrometer has greatly advanced our ability to identify unknown substances. An Infrared detector, known as the HazMatID system, will further overcome limitations in existing detection equipment and enable a positive identification of the chemical being tested.

TRAINING

We conducted two multi-agency chemical, biological and radiological (CBR) management courses this year. Representatives from Western Australia Police, fire services, health, ambulance and other response and support agencies participated in the three day courses. Western Australia is leading the field in CBR management training and other States are using our course materials in their own training development.

Exercise Canister

Exercise Canister 2007, a two-day multi-agency chemical, biological and radiological materials exercise, was held in April 2007. It specifically examined Western Australia's CBR response capability.

As a follow-up, all of the agencies reviewed and modified protocols and procedures in preparation for an actual chemical, biological and radiological materials incident.

RESPONSE

During 2006-07, career and volunteer firefighters responded to a total of 324 incidents where there were hazardous conditions, of which 93 involved hazardous materials.

NOTABLE INCIDENTS

COLES WOOLSTORES, FREMANTLE – JANUARY 2007

An unknown gas, believed to be deliberately released, challenged firefighters and the Department of Health as their equipment was unable to identify the substance. The incident resulted in approximately \$1 million in lost trade.