

What is a Local Emergency Planning Committee?

A Guide for First Responders

In October 1986, Congress enacted the "Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know Act" (EPCRA) and "Superfund Amendments Re-authorization Act Title III (SARA Title III) in direct response to the 1984 Union-Carbide toxic gas release in Bhopal, India (resulting in thousands of deaths and injuries). Under United States Code Title 42, the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) is the agency responsible for development and implementation of this legislation on the local level.

What you need to know:

1. The law exists to protect and educate the general public; it insures that residents have a right-to-know what types of chemicals are being stored, used, released, and discarded in their community.



2. The laws also serve business/industry employees and first responders by protecting their right-to-know about chemicals they may be exposed to in the course of performing their jobs.

3. Federal law requires business and industry operators submit annual chemical inventories (Tier II Chemical Lists) to the Texas Department of State Health Services (TDSHS), the local Fire Chief, and the LEPC no later than March 1st.

4. Failure to file is a violation of both Federal and State laws.

5. In the event of certain types of chemical release of (i.e., spill, leak, emission, gas cloud), a business/industry must report the incident immediately. Texas Health & Safety Code specifically states a timeline for reporting and failure to do so is a violation of both Federal and State law—*whether or not First Responders were dispatched to the scene.*



6. If First Responders are dispatched to a release incident and a chemical list is **not** on file within the jurisdiction, the operator is in violation. In addition, *the responding agencies are entitled to recover the costs of securing, containing, and managing the incident.*



7. As a first responder, you are the eyes and ears of the LEPC in the field. Report significant incidents to the Collin County Fire Marshal and the LEPC.

Remind business/industry owners, operators, site managers, and employees to report release incidents; emphasize that Federal and State laws have specific fines and penalties for failing to do so.

The LEPC's responsibilities are:

◇ To obtain and provide the general public with information guaranteed under EPCRA and SARA Title III; inform citizens about their right-to-know and reassure those who live and work in Collin County that the LEPC will act effectively.

◇ To provide a hazardous substances emergency response plan.

◇ To educate the general public what to do in the event of an emergency. Since September 11, 2001, public awareness and desire for information regarding basic self protection and crisis management has never been greater. Statistically, a community is at greater risk from an apartment fire, overturned fuel tanker, train derailment, manufacturing accident, or natural disaster than terrorism.



◇ To better educate and encourage business and industry operators in mandatory Tier II Chemical List filings, emphasize reporting of releases, and maintain up-to-date inventories.

◇ To educate and provide information to the general public that will enhance the performance of first responders and support agencies within Collin County and the Region to be better prepared for an emergency.



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For more information see:
www.collincountytx.gov
www.dshs.state.tx.us

Photos Courtesy: LaVada Brown, Randy Conrad, Lucas Volunteer Fire Department
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