



## HAZMAT AWARENESS – SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING!

You can consider chemical releases as fitting into 1 of 2 categories. The first can be categorized as releases of our chemicals. Since we inventory our hazardous substances, we know what substances we have, where we have them, and what quantities we have. We can therefore plan for accidental or incidental releases. Response actions for our chemical releases are part of Hazard Communication training.

The second category of chemical release is the release of hazardous materials from others. Public Works employees may discover a hazardous material from someone else including:

- Illegal dumping at remote sites owned by the agency.  
*Ask for or give examples such as lift/pump stations, recreational locations, and isolated roads.*
- Run-off of contaminants into waterways or catch basins.
  - Jetvac catch basins and clearing waterways.
  - Catch basins and bodies of water are also sites of illegal dumping.
- Motor vehicle crashes involving vehicles carrying hazardous materials.  
*Ask what major roads and highly industrial areas are where hazardous chemicals vehicles are common.*

There are various training levels for Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Responders.

Awareness	Operation	Technician & Specialist
Employees who may, in the course of their employment, discover a release of hazardous materials, and may not take actions to control the release of the substance.  We fall under this HazMat Level.	Employees who respond to a hazardous material release and may take defensive actions while not coming into contact with the material, to mitigate the consequences of the release.	Responders who are trained to make direct contact with hazardous materials and their containers to control and clean up the release.

Since these situations are not usually labeled, employees must be aware of the 6 detection clues:

1. Occupancy or location – The building you are working next to holds clues as to what chemical hazards may be present. *Ask: What chemical hazards could be reasonably anticipated if jet vacuuming a catch basin in front of a gas station?*
2. Container shape and construction – the more concave or round the end of the container is, and the more substantial the fittings on the container, the higher the pressure of the contents of the container.
3. Markings and colors – *Ask: a van with a vehicle wrap that advertises ABC Pool Service gets overturned in a motor vehicle crash in front of you. What hazardous substances could be in the van?*
4. Placards and labels – We learned about the GHS pictograms, but the US Dept. of Transportation still uses its placard system. Many of the pictures are similar, such as corrosive materials. Red placards indicate a flammable hazard. Please notice placards on vehicles as you travel around today.

5. Shipping papers and documents – Hazardous material carriers, such as trucks and trains, must have an inventory of their cargo in the cab of the truck, or engine of the train.
6. Your senses – Always be alert for unusual chemical odors, unusual noises such as hissing from a compressed gas cylinder or alarm bells, pools of spilled chemical or vapor clouds, and signs of chemical exposure (headache, dizziness, burning in your throat) in yourself.

If you come upon a hazardous material release, take these actions:

- **DO NOT COME IN CONTACT WITH THE MATERIAL.** If you do touch a hazardous material, immediately wash the area with water, unless the material may react with water. Use the detection clues above.
- **Make a Notification to the Police.** Tell the dispatcher what you see, such as the type of container(s), puddles or clouds, labels, dead animals/vegetation, etc.
- **Secure the Area.** Use what resources you have (cones, warning lights, etc.) to prevent others from entering the area.
- **Preserve Evidence.** Many hazardous material releases will involve some level of legal responsibility. Make a note of what you touched and what you did. Be aware of tire/shoe tracks.

