



Think Safety!

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Hazmat Incident Reporting And The Media



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As hard as company personnel may work to prevent accidents, it just takes one letdown, or in some cases even an incident beyond their control to produce an accident.

In addition to damaging lives, property, and the bottom line, this accident can pose a serious risk to a company's reputation and its future as anyone who has ever been involved in such an occurrence can attest.

After, the accident occurs, what do you do? The actions taken next are critical. The proper authorities must be correctly notified. The media must be managed not ignored. In today's time, social media must be considered in addition to the traditional media.

In this issue of *Think Safety*, we will discuss proper notification procedures and the technique for a managed response to the media.

Reporting Incidents:

According to The United States Department of Transportation Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, there are strict reporting requirements for accidents involving hazardous materials as provisioned in 49 CFR.

As detailed in § 171.15, all hazardous material incidents that occur during the course of transportation in commerce (including loading, unloading, and temporary storage) must be reported as soon as practical but no later than 12 hours after the occurrence of an incident in which it directly results in a death, a person receives an injury that results in admittance to a hospital,

the general public is evacuated for one hour or more, a major road or facility is shut down for one hour or more, or the operational flight pattern or routine of an aircraft is altered.

The incident must be reported by the person in physical presence of the hazardous material. This person may be a driver in the case of a bobtail or transport or a plant manager in the case of a propane facility.

The incident must be reported by telephone to the DOT's National Response Center (NRC) at 800-424-8802 (toll free) or 202-267-2675. It can be reported online at

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Reporting Incidents:

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<http://www.nrc.uscg.mil>.

Each report must include the following information:

Name of Reporter;

Name and address of person represented by reporter;

Phone number where reporter can be contacted;

Date, time, and location of the incident.

The extent of injury, if any;

Class or division, proper shipping name, and quantity of hazardous materials involved, if such information is available;

Type of incident and nature of hazardous material involvement and whether a continuing danger to life exists at the scene.

In addition a Hazardous Materials Incident Report must be filed on DOT Form F 5800.1 (01/2004) within 30 days of discovery of any of the incidents included in **Subsection 171.15.**



A report must also be filed if a specification cargo tank with a capacity of 1,000 gallons or greater containing any hazardous material suffers structural damage to the lading retention system or damage that requires repair to a system intended to protect the lading retention system, even if there is no release of hazardous material.

Submit the written Hazardous Materials Incident Report to the Information Systems Manager, PHH-60, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, East Building, 1200 New Jersey Ave., SE., Washington, DC 20590-0001, or an electronic Hazardous Material Incident Report to the Information System Manager, PHH-60, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration, Department of Transportation, Washington, DC 20590-0001 at <http://hazmat.dot.gov>.

Retain a written or elec-

Each hazmat incident report must include the following information:

- **Name of Reporter;**
- **Name and address of person represented by reporter;**
- **Phone number where reporter can be contacted;**
- **Date, time, and location of the incident.**
- **The extent of injury, if any;**
- **Class or division, proper shipping name, and quantity of hazardous materials involved, if such information is available;**
- **Type of incident and nature of hazardous material involvement and whether a continuing danger to life exists at the scene.**

tronic copy of the Hazardous Materials Incident Report for a period of two years at the reporting person's principal place of business. If the written or electronic Hazardous Materials Incident Report is maintained at other than the reporting person's principal place of business, the report must be made available at the reporting person's principal place of business within 24 hours of a request for the report by an authorized representative or special agent of the Department of Transportation.

A Hazardous Materials Incident Report must be updated

within one year of the date of occurrence of the incident whenever:

1. A death results from injury caused by a hazardous material;
2. There was a misidentification of the hazardous material or package information on a prior incident report;
3. Damage, loss or related cost that was not known when the initial incident report was filed becomes known; or
4. Damage, loss, or related cost changes by \$25,000 or more, or 10 percent of the prior total estimate, whichever is greater.

Working With The Media:

Like it or not, the media often has the power to shape public perception of your company, and when an accident involving your company is at the center of a media inquiry, your response may very well determine whether the accident continues to cause collateral damage.

Your company should develop a strategy for coping with the media. There are several key elements to that strategy.

1. Designate a company spokesperson to respond to media inquiries and ensure that all employees know the name and contact information for the person so they know

where they should direct media inquiries.

2. Research and become familiar with the print and electronic broadcast media outlets and the reporters and editors that you are likely to encounter.

3. Clearly define in your media relation's policy what kinds

of data and information must remain confidential.

4. Always be honest. Never knowingly tell an untruth or exaggerate. Trust is a critical ingredient in developing positive and enduring media relations and if you violate that

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Working With The Media:

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trust it will have very negative results.

5. NEVER EVER say those fateful words, “No Comment.” This immediately makes you look like you are hiding something. Instead you might say something like: “I’m sorry but this matter is the subject of an ongoing investigation or lawsuit and I am unable to respond to that question at this time.” A “No Comment” also guarantees that your side of the story will not be part of the public discussion.

6. Never speculate. Stick to what you know and your area of expertise. If you do not know the answer to a reporter’s question say you don’t know.

Do not try to “fake it” because that will come back to haunt you. Instead, try to help the reporter reach a source who is able to answer the question. Members of the media remember who provides reliable resources and by helping them you will enhance your credibility and they will likely come back to you in the future.

7. Always speak clearly in plain English that average readers and listeners can understand. Avoid the use of any jargon or bureaucratic language.

8. Treat reporters, editors, and program directors courteously. Their impression of you and your firm will affect their impression of the entire orga-

nization, and that may possibly influence how they decide to write and broadcast stories about you and your company.

9. Always return calls from the media in a timely manner that is sensitive to their deadlines, if possible. Reporters are typically on tight deadlines and will appreciate your promptness. If they leave a message for someone who is not available or can’t be reached, have someone else return the call. This is very important

since you will not create a favorable and positive impression if

you hear on the evening newscast or read in the newspaper that your company or organization “could not be reached for comment.”

10. If you do not have the information you need to answer a question and you need time to research or think about how to answer a question, then you should tell the reporter that you need some time. You should also inquire what his or her deadline is, and then promise them you’ll call back with an answer before that time.

11. Never argue with the reporter. Be persuasive, but never be confrontational.

12. Do not hesitate to ask the reporter questions about the story they are doing. You might ask about the theme, the point of view, and who else is being interviewed?



Eighteen Rules Of Thumb For Managing The Media

1. Designate A Spokesperson
2. Become Familiar With Media Outlets You Are Likely To Encounter
3. Define Your Media Relations Release Policy
4. Always Be Honest
5. Never Say “No Comment”
6. Never Speculate
7. Always Speak Clearly In Plain English
8. Treat The Media Members With Courtesy
9. Always Return Calls In A Timely Manner
10. Gather Information With The Reporter’s Deadline In Mind
11. Never Argue With The Reporter
12. Do Not Hesitate To Ask Questions About The Story
13. Do Not Hesitate To Share Information That Is Of Public Record
14. Speak To The Reporter As If You Are Speaking To The Public
15. Assume That Everything You Say Is “On The Record”
16. Never Ask To Review The Story
17. Never Assume The Reporter Will Do The Story From Your Angle
18. Be Selective In Challenging The Story

Working With The Media:

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13. Do not hesitate to share information that is already a matter of public record. Remember that if you withhold such information, the reporter will develop other sources and get the information anyway.

14. A great guide to help you frame the answers to questions from the media is always remember that whenever you speak to a reporter, you are really speaking to the public.

15. It is best to assume that everything you say to a reporter is "on the record" and can be reported or broadcast. Your best advice is to remember that if you don't want to see it in print or hear it on the

air, then don't say it.

16. Never try to do the media's job and never assume that the media is there to do the story "your way" or with the "news angle" you want.

17. Never ask the reporter if you can review the story before it's published. This will let the reporter know that he or she is dealing with an uninformed or ill informed and non-media savvy person. However, it is okay for you to ask the reporter during the interview to read back your quotes to confirm accuracy.

18. Always be very selective in any challenges to the reporter's end product. A basic guideline to consider is that if

the published story contains minor factual errors or omissions, do not make a big deal of it.

On the other hand, if the story seriously misrepresents your position or misstates an important fact, then you can call it to the reporter's attention in a polite communication, requesting a correction.

This is an extremely sensitive area in media relations and the best advice is that unless the timeliness of the correction is critical, do not call to complain. And avoid the most serious of transgressions in media relations by never going over the reporter's head to complain to his or her editor

or news executive unless the reporter's response is wholly unsatisfactory. Again, be careful in this area since you never want to alienate reporters.

If the situation is handled correctly, you may be able to secure some positive media relations for your company in the future. Reporters often develop sources they use in covering industries that are technical in nature. If you manage the accident response correctly, the reporter may remember to call you when he or she needs that quote for the propane industry, thus giving your company some positive press.

Working With Social Media:

Many propane companies have found that social media such as Facebook and Twitter can be good marketing tools. However, what happens when there is an incident, such as an accident, that has the potential to cause a negative backlash on your social media site?

Here are six basic principles for handling difficult questions and statements on the social web.

Move fast. The longer you take to respond, the more you risk appearing unresponsive, uncaring or, worse, secretive.

Be accurate. Despite the pressure on speed, try to be as factual as possible – angry customers and bloggers love to highlight, question and poke holes in woolly or cagey responses.

Be flexible. If you don't have the full facts, say so pub-

licly and communicate updates thereafter regularly. Appear anxious to help, as opposed to desperate to please.

Be transparent. Admit if you have made a mistake and even identify actions you are taking and will take to remedy the situation.

Be sincere. If the complaint is genuine, apologize sincerely and with humility and in language appropriate to the

audience. And yet an apology will mean nothing unless the problem is resolved in a reasonable manner.

Be human. Look to use language that is accessible, engaging and empathetic while remaining at core professional and objective. Avoid jargon and respond directly to the individual or group using their actual names.



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Training Quiz

Name _____ Social Security Number _____

1. All hazardous material incidents that occur during the course of transportation in commerce (including loading, unloading, and temporary storage) must be reported as soon as practical but no later than ___ hours after the occurrence of an incident in which it directly results in a death, a person receives an injury that results in admittance to a hospital, the general public is evacuated for one hour or more, a major road or facility is shut down for one hour or more, or the operational flight pattern or routine of an aircraft is altered.
A. 10 B. 24 C. 36 D. 12
2. The incident must be reported by the person in physical presence of the hazardous material.
A. True B. False
3. Each report must include the following information:
A. Name of Reporter; B. Extent of Injury; C. Type of Incident D. A,B, and C
4. A report must also be filed if a specification cargo tank with a capacity of 1,000 gallons or greater containing any hazardous material suffers structural damage to the lading retention system or damage that requires repair to a system intended to protect the lading retention system, even if there is no release of hazardous material.
A. True B. False
5. Retain a written or electronic copy of the Hazardous Materials Incident Report for a period of _____ at the reporting person's principal place of business.
A. 1 year B. 2 years C. 3 years D. 5 years
6. It is a good idea to designate a company spokesperson to speak with the media.
A. True B. False
7. It is a good idea to clearly define a company's media policy as well as what information can be released.
A. True B. False
8. If you don't want to talk to a reporter, it is always a good idea to say, "No Comment."
A. True B. False
9. If you don't know the answer to a reporter's question, it is a good idea to _____.
A. Help him find a source B. Ignore Him C. Tell him good luck D. Make up an answer
10. Always assume when you speak to a reporter that what you say is "On the Record."
A. True B. False
11. Which of these is okay to do concerning a story that affects your company?
A. Ask to pre-read the story B. Ask for quotes to be read for accuracy C. Argue with reporter
12. Which of these is a good idea in dealing with social media backlash?
A. Move Fast B. Be Accurate C. Be Sincere D. A, B, and C

Training Quiz Answers

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