



Coffee Break Training - Hazardous Materials

Petroleum Crude Oil: Principles of Successful Incident Management

No. HM-2014-4 November 10, 2014

Learning Objective: The student will be able to explain the key principles of the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and Unified Command as they relate to the successful management of a crude oil transportation incident.

The successful management of any incident, especially hazardous materials incidents, is based on the implementation of an Incident Management System (IMS). NIMS is a systematic, proactive approach to guide departments and agencies at all levels of government, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to work together seamlessly and manage incidents involving all threats and hazards — regardless of cause, size, location or complexity — in order to reduce loss of life and property and harm to the environment. The purpose of NIMS is to provide a common approach for managing incidents based on a flexible but standardized set of incident management practices, with emphasis on common principles, a consistent approach to operational structures and supporting mechanisms, and an integrated approach to resource management.

Although a single Incident Commander (IC) normally handles the command function, an IMS organization may be expanded into a Unified Command. The Unified Command is a structure that brings together the “ICs” of all major organizations involved in the incident in order for them to coordinate an effective response while at the same time carrying out their own jurisdictional responsibilities. The Unified Command structure links the organizations responding to the incident and provides a forum for these entities to make consensus decisions. Members of the Unified Command work together to develop a common set of incident objectives and strategies, share information, maximize the use of available resources, and enhance the efficiency of the individual response organizations.

Initial site management and control will be a critical benchmark in managing the problem. Due to the size, duration and complexity of these incidents, ICs should consider the possibility of additional support from regional or state **All-Hazards Incident Management Teams** (AHIMTs). AHIMTs are multiagency/multijurisdictional teams for extended incidents that are formed and managed at the local, state or tribal level. They are designated teams of trained personnel from different departments, organizations, agencies and jurisdictions. AHIMTs are deployed as teams representing multiple disciplines that manage major and/or complex incidents requiring a significant number of local, state or tribal resources. They do not assume command of the incident; they help local officials manage incidents that extend into multiple operational periods and require a written Incident Action Plan. These incidents can include weather-related disasters, such as a tornado, earthquake or flood, or major hazardous materials incidents, such as train derailments.

The railroad will integrate its response assets into the public safety NIMS structure. While the exact structure will vary based on the scope and nature of the incident scenario, it will often be integrated as the Railroad Branch within the Operations Section.

Emergency responders should anticipate a large number of liaison agencies operating at the scene (e.g., U.S. Coast Guard, Environmental Protection Agency, National Transportation Safety Board, Chemical Safety Board, private contractors). In addition, nonemergency regional and municipal agencies may have a role to play and need to be integrated into the command structure.

Additional information on NIMS can be found at <http://www.fema.gov/national-incident-management-system>. The National Fire Academy offers a number of incident management training courses. Detailed course information can be located at <http://apps.usfa.fema.gov/nfacourses/catalog/search?forget=1&courseKeywords=&courseCurriculum.id=9>.



An Incident Management System (IMS) based on a Unified Command structure is essential for the successful management of a crude oil rail transportation incident. (Photo/Steve Zumwalt/Federal Emergency Management Agency)

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