



COLUMBIA POLICE DEPARTMENT

"Policing Excellence through Community Partnerships"

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Subject: Section 13 – Hazardous Materials		
Amends/Supersedes: Section 13 – Hazardous Materials 2008	Chief of Police: <i>W.A. Hinkle</i>	
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

A hazardous material incident can be defined as: an emergency created by the release or potential release of a hazardous material; or any release or potential release of a hazardous substance in an unplanned or unexpected manner. **Safety is dependent on the officer's ability to recognize and identify hazardous conditions.**

2.0 VULNERABILITY

South Carolina's industrial capacity and network of interstate highways and railways that supply industries with chemical and petroleum products make it vulnerable to releases of hazardous materials from both stationary sites and transportation sources.

3.0 PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

Officers have four primary responsibilities when responding to incidents involving hazardous materials.

Recognition/Identification – Officers must be able to recognize that an incident involves hazardous materials.

Isolation – Officers must be able to establish a perimeter, isolating the involved area and assist in the removal of un-injured and un-contaminated persons from the area.

Protection – Officers must ensure their own personal safety and the safety of uninvolved public.

Notification – Officers must notify the Communications Center and supervisors of the incident.

4.0 ASSESS THE SITUATION

Safety, including officer safety should be considered first. Officers should resist the urge to rush in and should consider the following:

- Is there a fire, spill, or a leak?
- What are the weather conditions?

- What is the terrain like?
- Who/what is at risk: people, property, or the environment?
- What actions should be taken?
- What resources (people and equipment) are required to address the situation?
- What can be done immediately?

5.0 USING YOUR SENSES

Officers may increase their risk of exposure by depending on their senses to identify hazardous materials.

- Low Risk Senses: Sight and Sound
- High Risk Senses: Smell, Touch and Taste

Some materials (such as hydrogen sulfide) can deaden the sense of smell after 1 or 2 breaths at low concentrations. Therefore, one may initially smell the material and the odor will appear to go away when in fact the concentration is getting higher.

6.0 OFFICER SAFETY

The decisions made by officers within the first few minutes of an incident will have a direct impact upon the outcome of the incident. Decisions based upon safety and public protection during the critical first minutes greatly enhance survivability.

In order to make these critical decisions; officers must be able to recognize the presence hazardous materials and the nature of the threat. Officers may attempt to classify and identify the material(s) involved if it can be done safely. Officers should not exceed the level to which they are trained and equipped.

Toxic materials can enter the body through inhalation; skin / eye contact and absorption; and ingestion. To limit exposure to toxic materials, officers should always approach an incident from upwind and uphill. If you cannot approach from both, upwind always takes priority. If you cannot approach from upwind then stay even further away.

- Isolate the area - Without entering the area.
- Keep people away including unprotected emergency responders.
- Keep everyone upwind.
- Keep out of low lying areas.
- Avoid direct contact with the hazardous material, its gases and vapors, or smoke from any fire.
- Prevent Secondary Contamination as a result of coming in contact with items or persons who have not been properly decontaminated.
- Do not allow anyone or anything to leave the area without being evaluated for decontamination needs.
- Victims should be encouraged to move to a safe upwind and uphill location and remain isolated until they can be assessed. Depending upon the material involved, failure to isolate these people can place the community at risk and increase their exposure to the materials if they are not properly decontaminated.
- Victims should not be transported to a hospital until necessary field decontamination has taken place. Failure to decontaminate patients in the field has resulted in the closure of emergency rooms of hospitals both large and small due to secondary contamination.

7.0 DE-ESCALATION

At the conclusion of the incident, officers should be debriefed and provided with the following information:

- What they may have been exposed to.
- What the signs and symptoms of over exposure are.
- What procedures are taken if these signs and symptoms occur.