

	HARRISONBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT General Orders	Policy Number: 416
	Chapter: Field Operations	Total Pages: 4
	Section: Hazardous Material Response	Issue Date: 07/02/2021
	Issued By: Kelley Warner, Chief of Police	Effective Date: 07/02/2021
	Replaces: All General Orders Previously Issued Relative to Subject	
VALEAC Standards: OPR.05.01 (b), OPR.07.06 (b)		

A. POLICY AND PURPOSE

Exposure to hazardous materials presents potential harm to department members and the public. This policy outlines the responsibilities of officers who respond to these events and the factors that should be considered while on-scene, including the reporting of exposures and supervisor responsibilities.

It is the policy of the Harrisonburg Police Department to respond to hazardous material emergencies with due regard for the safety of the public and those members responding to such incidents.

Hazardous material situations are usually under the direction and control of the Harrisonburg Fire Department; therefore, Harrisonburg Police Department personnel shall coordinate their efforts with the Incident Commander.

B. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

All employees are expected to fully comply with the guidelines and timelines set forth in this policy. Responsibility rests with the supervisor to ensure that any violations of policy are investigated and appropriate training, counseling and/or disciplinary action is initiated. This directive is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. It should not be construed as the creation of a higher standard of safety or care in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third party claims. Violation of this directive, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department, and then only in a non-judicial administrative setting.

C. DEFINITIONS

CBRNE - Chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear and explosive defense are protective measures taken in situations in which chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear warfare (including terrorism) hazards may be present.

Hazardous material - A substance which, by its nature, containment, or reactivity, has the capability of inflicting harm during exposure; characterized as being toxic, corrosive, flammable, reactive, an irritant or strong sensitizer and thereby posing a threat to health when improperly managed.

D. HAZARDOUS MATERIAL RESPONSE

Officers may encounter situations involving suspected hazardous materials, such as at the scene of a traffic accident, chemical spill, or fire. When officers arrive at an incident involving a suspected hazardous material, they should take certain steps to protect themselves and other persons.

HPD officers are only trained on hazardous materials awareness and do not have proper protective gear for CBRNE incidents. Officers shall not attempt to approach the scene of a suspected chemical, biological, radiological, or other hazardous area. To the extent possible, officers should remain upwind at a distance of at least 500 feet and wait for response from the fire department, thus avoiding exposure of all gases, fumes, and smoke.

The fire department is trained and equipped to properly respond to and mitigate most incidents involving hazardous materials and biohazards.

Officers should not perform tasks or use equipment without proper training. An officer entering the area may require decontamination before he/she is allowed to leave the scene and should be evaluated by appropriate technicians and emergency medical services personnel for signs of exposure.

E. CONSIDERATIONS

The following steps should be considered at any scene involving suspected hazardous materials:

- a. Make the initial assessment of a potentially hazardous material from a safe distance.
- b. Notify Emergency Communications Center, appropriate supervisors, the appropriate fire department and hazardous response units.
 1. Provide weather conditions, wind direction, a suggested safe approach route and any other information pertinent to responder safety.
- c. Remain upwind, uphill and at a safe distance, maintaining awareness of weather and environmental conditions, until the material is identified and a process for handling has been determined.
- d. Attempt to identify the type of hazardous material from a safe distance using optical aids (binoculars or spotting scopes) if they are available. Identification can be determined by:
 1. Placards or use of an emergency response guidebook.
 2. Driver's statements or shipping documents from the person transporting the material.
 3. Information obtained from any involved person with knowledge regarding the hazardous material. Information should include:
 - a. The type of material
 - b. How to secure and contain the material
 - c. Any other information to protect the safety of those present, the community and the environment
- e. Provide first aid to injured parties if it can be done safely and without contamination.

- f. Make reasonable efforts to secure the scene to prevent access from unauthorized individuals and to protect and identify any evidence.
- g. Begin evacuation of the immediate and surrounding areas, dependent on the material. Voluntary evacuation should be considered; mandatory evacuation may be necessary and will depend on the type of material.

F. REPORTING EXPOSURE

Officers who believe they have been exposed to a hazardous material shall immediately report the exposure to a supervisor. Each exposure shall be documented in an incident report that shall be forwarded via chain of command to the appropriate Commander as soon as practicable. Should the affected officer be unable to document the exposure for any reason, it shall be the responsibility of the notified supervisor to complete the report.

Injury or illness caused or believed to be caused by exposure to hazardous materials shall be reported the same as any other on-duty injury or illness, in addition to a incident report as applicable.

a. SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES

When a supervisor has been informed that an employee has been exposed to a hazardous material, he/she shall ensure that immediate medical treatment is obtained, and appropriate action is taken to mitigate the exposure or continued exposure.

b. KEY AGENCIES

Depending on the materials involved, any one or all of the following agencies will be contacted by fire or police during an actual incident; or for information contact the:

- a. Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM), 1-800-468-8892
- b. Virginia Emergency Operations Center, 1-800-674-2400
- c. Chemical Transportation Emergency Center (CHEMTREC), 1-800-424-9300
- d. Oil or polluting substances in water, Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (VDEQ) Valley Regional Office, 540-574-7800

G. PROCEDURE

a. EVACUATION OR SHELTER IN PLACE PROCEDURES

In the event the Fire Department Incident Commander issues an evacuation or shelter-in-place (seeking safety within the building one already occupies) order, the Police Department will implement the order. The Incident Commander will direct personnel to advise affected residents to evacuate to designated locations, or stay in their homes, close all windows and doors, and turn off heating and ventilation equipment (Shelter In Place Protection).

Things to consider include:

- a. Additional staffing required.
- b. Notification methods such as door-to-door, public address system, use of local radio stations, etc.
- c. Size of area and number of people living in the area to be evacuated.
- d. Use of mass transit to move evacuated people.
- e. Housing of evacuated persons, where possible, in local/county schools.
- f. Security of evacuated areas to prevent looting and premature return.

The Incident Commander will make the decision when it is appropriate for people to return home.