



JACKSON COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

NEWS

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April is Hazardous Materials Safety Month

April is Hazardous Materials Safety Month and local officials are reminding residents about actions they may need to take in case of a hazardous material/chemical spill or release. Hazardous materials are used at industrial facilities in the production of all types of products. These materials are delivered via truck, rail, and pipeline. These materials are typically handled every day with great care, following Federal and State chemical safety regulations and required annual training. However, hazardous materials can still pose a danger if they are mishandled or mislabeled, or a spill or release occurs due to failure of equipment or containment systems or human error.

Federal law requires the development of Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPCs), which bring together various local stakeholders to plan for chemical emergencies impacting the public. In Jackson County the LEPC is chaired by Orval Rowe, Coordinator of the Jackson County Emergency Management Agency. According to Rowe, “facilities handling or storing large quantities of hazardous chemicals file Tier II annual reports with the LEPC, so that local fire departments and other response agencies can better plan for chemical emergencies.” Chemicals in transit are also considered during local emergency planning.

Jackson County Health Department is an active participant in the Jackson County LEPC. Recently the health department posted a [Chemical Release Preparedness guide](#) to its website. This guide gives residents instructions to follow in the immediate wake of a chemical spill or release. The guide covers the basics of sheltering in place and evacuation, and life-saving actions to take when such an incident occurs.

“The tragedy that struck last year in Effingham County, where five people perished due to an accident involving a truck carrying anhydrous ammonia, is a stark reminder that hazardous materials incidents can occur quickly and have devastating impacts”, according to Bart Hagston, Administrator at Jackson County Health Department. It is important for the general public, and not just public safety agencies, to

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be aware of actions to take should they come upon a possible hazardous materials/chemical spill or release.

If you suspect a hazardous materials situation:

- Look for signs that indicate hazardous materials may be present.
- Do not walk into, touch, or inhale any material.
- Stay uphill and upwind from the incident.
- Request assistance by calling 9-1-1.
- Follow guidance from officials on sheltering in place or evacuating.

To learn more about being prepared, view the Chemical Release Preparedness guide at <https://jchdonline.org/emergency-preparedness/>. To see more about hazardous materials and other hazards for which you can prepare, visit www.Ready.Illinois.gov.

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