

SAFETY



U.S. Department
of Transportation

Hazmat Transportation Community Urged to Increase Safety Measures

Since the September 11 terrorist attacks, security has become an increasingly critical transportation concern. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) is asking that additional safety precautions be taken regarding the transportation system. Security measures should be reviewed and strengthened as appropriate. The Department is requesting shippers and transporters of high-hazard materials to consider altering routes to avoid populated areas whenever practicable. *(For high-hazard materials see 49 CFR 172.504 Table 1)*

“I understand the complexity of these issues, and I know there have been numerous studies on many of these issues. Yet the larger context has changed dramatically. We now face a different security threat not only in transportation, but in all aspects of American life. We have to be willing to meet that changed threat with additional counter-measures, and still find ways to keep our transportation systems the efficient and vital circulation system of our economy. We must therefore judge our security options in a different light than we might have judged them in the past,” Secretary Norman Y. Mineta said.

In the wrong hands hazardous materials pose a threat to security. It doesn't take a high degree of training, technical expertise, or sophisticated equipment to attack with devastating results. Transportation vehicles and infrastructure are potential “soft” targets. There are several reasons for this: the number of vehicles and structures makes them difficult to defend; the economic impact of destroying infrastructure could be significant; and the public psychological impact of an incident could be tremendous.

As it would be impossible to institute airport-style security checkpoints by all modes of transport, such as highway, preventing such attacks may be accomplished by simply making transportation workers aware of their surroundings. Transportation workers should watch for and report any suspicious activities they may see. Hazmat vehicles should not be left unattended. Companies should insure that hazardous materials are in responsible and reliable hands.

This Safety Alert is being released in conjunction with a memorandum from the USDOT's Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) dated September 26, 2001 addressed to FMCSA's State Directors and Division Administrators.