News

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New Electronic Guidebook to Help First Responders
Quickly and Safely Respond to HazMat Incidents

Two federal agencies today joined forces to give fire fighters and other emergency responders instant access to information that will help them – in the first critical moments of an incident – determine the best way to safely contain hazardous materials spills and battle chemical fires.

Emergency responders will for the first time have electronic access through laptops and personal digital assistants (PDAs) to the 2008 Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG) under the new effort between the U.S. Departments of Transportation (DOT) and Health and Human Services (HHS). The guidebook is the go-to reference for first responders to help them quickly identify hazardous material classifications, determine the best response, and protect themselves and the general public immediately after an incident.

"This new digital tool will give our police, fire fighters, and other emergency responders first on the scene the information they need to make the rapid-fire decisions necessary to protect the public and themselves," said Ted Willke, PHMSA Associate Administrator for Hazardous Materials Safety.

The new electronic guidebook was made possible by a new agreement signed today between DOT's Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) and the HHS's National Library of Medicine.

The library developed special software to give emergency responders access to the guidebook through PDAs as well as Windows-based laptops and desktops. The software application, called the Wireless Information System for Emergency Responders (WISER), will be available later this year.

For more information on the ERG, visit http://hazmat.dot.gov/pubs/erg/gydebook.htm/. For information on WISER visit http://wiser.nlm.nih.gov/.

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