
APPENDIX J

SAMPLE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INCIDENT

RESPONSE TEAM

PROGRAM (HIRT)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SAN DIEGO COUNTY, CALIFORNIA

H I R T
THE HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM

SECTION I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On October 1, 1986 a regional hazardous materials emergency response program was implemented in San Diego County. The program was designated the Hazardous Materials Incident Response Team or HIRT for short. The program was developed by, and is a program of, the San Diego County Unified Disaster Council. The Disaster Council is the governing body of the Unified San Diego County Emergency Services Organization. This Emergency Services Organization was established under an Agreement of Joint Powers signed by the County of San Diego and all incorporated cities within the county.

The program calls for hazardous materials emergency response to be provided County-wide through the joint efforts of the San Diego Fire Department (SDFD) HAZMAT Response Team and the San Diego County Department of Health Services' Hazardous Materials Management Division (HMMD). Each of these agencies have highly trained teams with many years experience in responding to hazardous materials emergencies. The cities and the County are the primary funding source for HIRT.

Under this program, a combined response is provided. The SDFD HAZMAT Response Team is responsible for isolating and containing the incident, stopping the release, effecting rescues and other related tasks. The HMMD, on the other hand, is responsible for assessing the risk to public health and safety and the environment, taking the necessary steps to mitigate these hazards, insuring adequate clean-up of the area and conducting necessary enforcement activities. The combined team is referred to as the Hazardous Materials Incident Response Team, or HIRT.

HIRT will respond to the request of first responders at a hazardous materials incident. HIRT provides advice and technical support to the first responder but does not assume scene management responsibility. The first responder, or appropriate agency designated by law, maintains full control and authority over the incident and retains responsibility for any release of public information concerning the incident.

HIRT is normally activated through the City of San Diego's Fire Department Communications Center. HIRT can also be contacted directly by telephone or established radio channels. Communication and consultation between local agencies and the HIRT can be

maintained while in route through the use of mobile telephones.

This program has a number of benefits some of which include:

1. Makes available, throughout San Diego County, a team of highly trained hazardous materials response professionals.
2. Reduces potential liability to individual jurisdictions by having a specialized response capability available.
3. Makes available to member jurisdictions an expert resource for a wide variety of hazardous materials questions, problems and issues.
4. Eliminates unnecessary duplication of effort by having one program providing a coordinated and standardized response making the best use of available resources.
5. Provides a formal process for cost recovery which takes advantage of the most recent enabling legislation.
6. Makes grant monies and equipment more accessible by consolidating into a single request the needs and requirements of the entire area (4255 square miles) and total population (exceeding 2,500,000) of San Diego County.
7. Allows for user control of a regional program by using, as the administrative authority, an existing regional organization of which the user jurisdictions are members.

The HIRT program is considered to be a successful, effective and desirable program. User jurisdictions have expressed a high level of satisfaction. While the number of incidents have increased, the team's experience and efficiency has improved and kept pace.

The HIRT program, with its' regional approvals, control and response, is unique in the country. Interest from other areas is high. Inquiries have been received from throughout California and from other states: Arizona, Florida, Massachusetts, Ohio and Oklahoma, to mention a few. The program is viewed nationally as a successful model program.

The following sections in this report provides greater detail on the various aspects of the HIRT program.