

Regional Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Plan
Washoe County Emergency Management and Homeland Security Program

SECTION 2: SITUATION AND PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

Section 2 describes the situation and planning assumptions for the Regional Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Plan.

2.1 Situation

Hazardous materials are used, stored, manufactured, and transported in and through Washoe County on a daily basis. To minimize the harm caused by a release of a hazardous material, an ongoing process of hazard and risk analysis, cooperative planning, resource identification, and preparation must be carried out. Because of limitations, the cities and county cannot prepare for every possible type of release but can prepare for those that are most likely to occur based on a hazard and risk analysis.

Hazardous materials (HAZMAT) incidents may occur anywhere and at any time in Washoe County. The potential for a HAZMAT incident in Washoe County depends on the volume, distribution, and/or use of chemicals and other hazardous substances in a particular area. In general, the likelihood of a HAZMAT incident is greatest in the following areas:

- Transportation Routes - Highways, railways, and commercial and military aviation routes constitute a major threat because of the multitude of chemicals and hazardous substances transported along them. Interstate 80 and Highway 395 are areas of concern as are the Union Pacific railroad tracks.
- Pipeline - Several pipelines travel through Washoe County carrying a wide variety of products for industrial, commercial, and residential use. The Kinder Morgan Pipeline Company, possibly the largest of the pipelines, services the entire county with petroleum products. The Paiute and Tuscarora Pipelines supply high-pressure natural gas for service to the communities.
- Business and Industry - The manufacturing and industrial firms in and near the Cities of Reno and Sparks have the potential for HAZMAT incidents and use or store products which may be harmful to the sensitive ecosystems of the area.
- Agriculture - Accidental releases of pesticides, fertilizers, and other agricultural chemicals may be harmful to human health and the environment. The majority of the agricultural industry consists of ranching and farming operations located throughout Washoe County.
- Illegitimate Business - Illegitimate business, such as clandestine drug laboratories, are a significant threat to human health, property, and the environment. In many instances, the residue is dumped in remote areas of the county or along the side of the road, posing a serious health threat to any unsuspecting person who comes in contact with it.
- Hazardous Waste - Hazardous waste (e.g., used motor oil, solvents, or paint) is occasionally dumped in remote areas of the county or along roadways. Like drug lab residue, illegally dumped hazardous waste poses a threat to human health, property, and the environment.
- Radioactive Materials - Interstate 80, Highway 395, and the railroads and air corridors are authorized routes for shipment of radioactive materials.
- Reno Tahoe International Airport and Stead Airport - A threat of downed aircraft exists because of the proximity of the airports to Reno, Sparks, and Washoe County. It is likely that area emergency crews would arrive prior to the arrival of airport personnel.
- Acts of Terrorism - Terrorist acts are more common today and much more sophisticated. Events of recent years have prompted a move towards preparedness for terrorist events.

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2.2 Assumptions

- HAZMAT incidents may occur at any time, day or night, and in populated as well as remote areas of Washoe County.
- HAZMAT incidents, even minor ones, usually require a multi-agency, multi-jurisdictional response. It is essential that the Incident Command System (ICS) be implemented immediately by responding agencies according to the Regional Hazardous Materials Response Team Operating Guide (found on the LEPC website washoecounty.us/lepc).
- HAZMAT incidents may pose significant risks to emergency response personnel. It is imperative that all emergency response personnel and potential first responders are properly trained in appropriate hazardous materials emergency response procedures.
- HAZMAT incidents may require large-scale evacuations or shelter-in-place actions. These operations may present significant challenges in terms of warning and notification, logistics, and agency coordination.
- HAZMAT incidents may generate widespread media and public interest. The media must be considered an ally in these emergencies; they can provide considerable assistance in emergency public information and warning.
- HAZMAT incidents may pose serious long-term threats to public health, property, and the environment.
- Significant HAZMAT incidents may require an extended commitment of personnel and resources from involved agencies and jurisdictions.
- Jurisdiction over the site of the release will remain within the city or county unless the city or county decides to relinquish its authority to another level of government.
- The emergency response official responding shall be the individual in charge of site specific Incident Command System (ICS) and shall be qualified at HAZMAT Incident Command.