

California Hazardous Materials Regional Planning Project: Summary

Regional hazardous materials emergency planning is required under federal law, which mandated the establishment of State Emergency Response Commissions and Local Emergency Planning Committees. Recent high-profile accidents have focused attention on the need for California to improve regional hazardous material emergency planning. Cal OES contracted with California State University, Sacramento Center for Collaborative Policy to provide strategic development, stakeholder management, work group facilitation, and document development for a multi-phase Regional Hazardous Materials Planning project.

Phase 1 of the project was completed in September 2014 and included: a detailed review and assessment of the available literature on hazardous materials emergency planning; interviews and meetings with key stakeholders; a workshop that provided feedback and recommendations; a recommended work plan and governance structure for the remaining phases of the project; and a document laying out the findings, gaps, and recommendations.

Significant findings from Phase 1 include:

- The State Emergency Response Committee is in a unique position to provide essential leadership, resources, and guidance.
- Statewide, consistent standards, with some degree of local flexibility, are needed.
- Predictable, reliable funding for regional hazardous materials emergency planning and for the effective functioning of Local Emergency Planning Committees is critical.
- The authorities, roles, and requirements of the many confusing and overlapping hazardous materials plans need to be clarified.
- There is a need for useful, functional guidance, tools, or templates for preparing and updating regional hazardous materials emergency plans.

The next major steps in the project are:

- Form an advisory group of key stakeholders.
- Develop a model template, guidance, toolkit, or other type of planning product that can provide needed assistance and guidance for regional hazardous materials emergency planning.
- Hold workshops throughout the state to obtain feedback on the planning products.
- Apply the prototype planning product to a regional hazardous materials emergency plan in an evaluated pilot test.