Responding to Rail Incidents

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Parties that offer for transportation, accept for transportation, transfer, trans-load, or otherwise handle hazardous material for transportation via rail are required to have the following available at all times: the basic description and technical name of the hazardous material, immediate hazards to health, risks of fire or explosion, immediate precautions to be taken in the event of an incident or accident, immediate methods for handling fires, and initial methods for handling spills or leaks in the absence of fire and preliminary first aid measures. They must also provide an emergency response telephone number for a person who is either knowledgeable regarding the hazardous material being shipped and has comprehensive emergency response and incident mitigation information for that material or has immediate access to a person who possesses such knowledge and information. The emergency response number may be the number for the shipper, consignee, beneficial owner, or contract services provider (e.g., CHEMTREC). When a service provider is used, the shipper must register with the company and provide safety data sheets and contact telephone numbers. During an emergency when the contract provider is called, the provider will provide responders with shipment information and will then contact the shipper and pass along the information. At this point, the shipper will contact the first responders. More information on requirements can be found in 49 Code of Federal Regulations 172 Subpart G.

In general, rail carriers transport products on lines that they own. However, there are a variety of agreements that allow carriers to operate on lines owned by other companies. Regardless of whose trains are operating on the line, the track owner is responsible for the emergency response phase of the incident. Once the emergency is over, cleanup or other monitoring work may be transferred to the transporter. Where trackage rights do not exist, the shipment continues to its destination after being transferred at an “Interchange Point.” At this Interchange Point, the responsibility shifts to the new line owner.

Currently, there are no requirements for the amount of response resources that track owners must have in order to respond to an incident on their lines. Below is a summary of resources available to several rail owners operating in Washington, Oregon, and Idaho. The rail companies surveyed for this information are Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF), Union Pacific Railroad (UP), Genesee & Wyoming, Inc. (Portland and Western Railroad, Puget Sound and Pacific Railroad), and Tacoma Rail/Tacoma Municipal Belt Line.

1100 Incident Management

Once a derailment involving hazardous materials is detected, the local Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP or 9-1-1 center) is alerted. Local emergency services are then dispatched and respond to the scene to conduct a scene size-up, request additional

resources, establish incident command, and initiate strategies to protect life, property, and the environment from fire and hazardous materials.

As additional local, state, federal, tribal, and private resources arrive, the command structure evolves into a UC with the following key positions:

- Local Agency Having Jurisdiction (or local on-scene spill coordinator);
- State OSC;
- Federal OSC, typically EPA and/or USCG;
- Tribal representative; and
- Responsible Party representative

UC will establish incident objectives that take into consideration and attempt to integrate existing local, railroad, state, federal, and tribal emergency response plans. Stakeholder agencies who do not have jurisdiction, authority, or a financial responsibility for the event – but have available resources and a vested interest in its outcome – will establish an Agency Representative who will report to the incident Liaison Officer. Upon assessing the scope and community-wide impacts of the incident, UC may request an Incident Management Team to support UC over multiple operational periods.

1200 Air Monitoring

Air monitoring resources vary according to organization. The initial air monitoring may be conducted by the local first responders and HAZMAT teams until additional resources arrive such as OSCs and OSROs. The capabilities of these responders can vary depending on their location and the resources available to them. This air monitoring would be used to inform responder and public safety decisions.

Several of the carriers rely on their response contractors to provide air monitoring. In general, this air monitoring would be performed specifically for cleanup operations and not necessarily to support public safety decision making. BNSF has a more robust air monitoring program than the other providers, called the Tactical Toxicology program that is designed to provide air monitoring information for the incident. BNSF has the ability to cascade additional air monitoring equipment into the region as well as toxicologists and industrial hygienists. BNSF's air monitoring program will support response activities and public safety decisions in coordination with the local IC/UC. UP has the same ability to bring in contractors that specialize in toxicology and environmental health to support public health and safety decisions.

In all rail incidents, decisions regarding public safety will be made by the local IC/UC.

1300 Resources for Fire Fighting

In general, resources for combating a fire resulting from a train incident will come from local fire departments. BNSF and UP have additional resources, including foam trailers staged in Montana, Washington, and Oregon. Rail owners may also maintain contracts with private industrial firefighting companies.

In Oregon, both BNSF and UP have partnered with the Oregon Office of State Fire Marshal to pre-position eight (8) firefighting foam trailers that are hosted by fire departments with 24/7 staffing to deploy them to an incident.

1400 Spill Response Equipment

In general, initial spill control at a train incident involving the release of hazardous materials will be implemented by first responders, local OSCs, or HAZMAT teams. Rail owners all contract with at least one spill response contractor whose equipment they would rely on in an incident resulting in a spill. Rail owners determine the number of cleanup organizations they contract with. BNSF and UP have company-owned spill response equipment staged throughout the region. This equipment is listed on the Western Response Resource List.

1500 Mutual Aid

Resources can be shared among the different rail companies if available, but there are no formal mutual aid agreements.