

Colorado Emergency Planning Commission

In October 1986, the Federal Superfund and Reauthorization Act (SARA/Title III) that includes the Emergency Planning and Community Right-To-Know provisions was enacted. This legislation was in response to several very severe hazardous materials incidents world-wide. It put in place several protection measures regarding hazardous materials incidents. The legislation required each state appoint a State Emergency Response Commission to implement the act in their state. In Colorado, the Colorado Emergency Planning Commission (CEPC) was created.

The CEPC implemented the act by designating Local Emergency Planning Districts (LEPD) and then requesting nominations from those districts for appointing Local Emergency Planning Committees (LEPC). Each LEPC has the charter of implementing the SARA/Title III requirements for their LEPD. These requirements include developing and publishing a hazardous material emergency response plan for their area, the creation of Right-To-Know procedure for their LEPD and monitoring of specific yearly hazardous materials reporting requirements.

Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC)

By federal and state law, each LEPC must include, at a minimum, representatives from each of the following groups or organizations:

1. Elected state and local officials.
2. Law enforcement, civil defense, fire fighting, first aid, health, local environmental, hospital and transportation personnel.
3. Broadcast and print media. (These entities are needed to get the word out about a release or for providing a channel for public education about LEPCs and their goals.)
4. Community groups. (Community groups, especially environmental activists and advocates, can raise issues and be very effective in representing the public concerns about chemical risks and hazards. It is a good idea to look for participation from community groups that are active in EPCRA issues. The LEPC can help channel their energy and concerns into useful suggestions and honest work. By inviting these groups to the table, LEPCs will find it far easier to achieve the intent of EPCRA.)
5. Owners and operators of facilities subject to the requirements of this article. Sometimes it is difficult to get LEPC members from each of these areas. The purpose of the diversity of stakeholders is to get a full handle on the complex job assigned to an LEPC, and each point of view and expertise lends more substance to the planning effort. Each area of interest and expertise represented on the LEPC membership adds to the depth of the LEPC effort.

Each LEPC appoints a chairperson and adopts procedural rules by which the LEPC will function, with an eye on the required tasks and duties of an LEPC. These rules must include provisions for public notification of committee activities, public meetings to discuss the emergency plan, public comments, response to such comments by the committee, and distribution of the emergency plan. Each LEPC must establish procedures for receiving and processing requests from the public for EPCRA information, including Tier Two information. Such procedures shall include the designation of an official to serve as coordinator for information. Federal and state law require each LEPC to review its emergency plan at least annually in a public meeting, or more frequently as changed circumstances in the community or at any facility may require.

Role of the LEPC

The **role** of the LEPC is to form partnerships with: local governments, communities, academia and industries as a resource for enhancing hazardous materials preparedness. Local governments are responsible for the integration of HAZMAT planning and response within their jurisdiction. This includes ensuring the local hazard analysis adequately addresses hazmat incidents; incorporating planning for hazmat incidents into the local emergency management plan and annexes; assessing capabilities and developing hazmat response capability using local resources, mutual aid and contractors; training responders; and exercising the plan.

EPCRA's emergency planning provisions are designed to promote the discovery and mitigation of risks associated with chemical use. To reduce risks, prevention, preparedness, and quick response to chemical emergencies are best. If properly executed, these three measures can make the difference between disaster and slight inconvenience.

Prevention involves identifying the causes of, and reducing the potential for, chemical accidents to occur. Proper safety measures, sound management practices, and preventive maintenance all reduce the potential for chemical accidents. No chemical safety management program can be guaranteed 100 percent effective.

Preparedness involves anticipating accidents that may occur despite prevention measures, and developing contingency, or emergency response, plans. Emergency response plans help facilities and local and state governments respond to accidents quickly and efficiently. These plans outline the procedures a facility and the community should follow in responding to a release. When accidents occur, it is imperative that the various players in the response process know their roles and use their resources wisely.

The emergency **planning process** has a greater impact than the plan itself, encouraging awareness, communication, and coordination of efforts.