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CHEMICAL SAFETY NETWORK

Hazardous Materials Education: Carbon County, Pennsylvania LEPC

RMP Network is designed to share successful practices in RMP implementation, risk communication, and use of the data. The projects detailed in RMP Network are easily reproducible, low cost and promote partnership-building in the community. This factsheet does not provide extensive information about a project. Rather, it is intended to help stakeholders generate ideas, identify tools and pinpoint funding sources for accident preparedness and prevention initiatives.

Purpose

The Carbon County, Pennsylvania, Local Emergency Planning Committee has developed educational programs to involve area school students in hazardous material issues.

LEPC members have a philosophy that if the children in the community are continually learning about chemical accident prevention and emergency preparedness, their parents will become involved as well. Led by a local television anchor who is a member of the LEPC, the committee has worked with the local school system to develop programs to educate students and teacher on how to shelter in place and other emergency procedures.

Framing the Message

The LEPC realized that it was important to explain to teachers and students why chemical release emergencies differ from natural hazard emergencies, such as tornados and floods, and why safety procedures may differ. Equally important was ensuring that students knew the proper safety procedures to follow for evacuation and shelter-in place in the event of a chemical accident.

Knowing it was also important to educate students as to why shelter-in-place is advantageous in some situations, during a classroom session, LEPC members blew large soap bubbles over the students to show how the quickly the wind can spread chemicals and why evacuation may not always be an option. Students also learned that evacuation and shelter-in-place are not interchangeable safety measures and when emergency management officials determine appropriate action for the incident, they should follow those directions implicity.

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Next, families learned what they would need to do in their home if they got the message to shelter-in place to keep contaminated air from entering doors and windows and how to protect themselves during a chemical release.

The LEPC and 11 area companies sponsored a logo contest that culminated in a calendar using the art work of students. The calendar contained emergency contact telephone numbers, LEPC information and detailed instructions on what steps to take should an accident occur. Students from throughout the county were asked to draw pictures describing what people should do if a chemical accident occurred. Twelve winners were chosen and their artwork was featured in the calender.

Community residents received a free calendar and the calendar was shared with other Pennsylvania LEPCs.

Funding

Each of the 11 companies paid $100 fee to place an advertisement in the calender. The LEPC also used some of the funds garnered from annual fees paid by companies that must comply with the state right-to-know law (Note: The county requires facilities to pay annual fees that range from $35-75 per chemical for filing Tier II reports and $100 from each facility for which EPCRA requires an emergency response plan).

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