

Chapter 21. Other Key Groups for Success of EPCRA

As mentioned in the beginning of this document, LEPCs and TEPCs are crucial to the success of this program, as they are within the community they represent and the potential risks posed by chemicals handled by facilities near them. LEPCs and TEPCs are encouraged to build a relationship with facilities that handle hazardous chemicals, as these facilities may assist in various activities that LEPCs and TEPCs are required to implement under EPCRA.

In addition to the organizations created under EPCRA, SERCs, TERCs, LEPCs and TEPCs, there are other representatives that are key to a successful EPCRA program and to preparing and protecting citizens and first responders. A few are discussed below.

21.1 Public Institutions

Public institutions, such as hospitals, schools, and state and local governments are vital to the success of any emergency response plan. Ambulance crews and emergency room personnel should be trained on how to treat victims of exposure to hazardous chemicals. Schools and public buildings personnel should be trained as they will be notified of emergencies and can assist with evacuations or shelters.

Representatives of these institutions should be encouraged to participate in the emergency planning process and become members of the LEPC or TEPC.

21.2 Industry and Small Businesses

In addition to providing information required under EPCRA on chemicals present, facilities may be the most valuable resource for emergency planning and response. Facility personnel are familiar with potential chemical risks and therefore best able to provide training on chemical hazards or emergencies. Facilities may also support LEPCs and TEPCs by providing emergency response equipment, as well as assisting in developing the emergency response plan.

Facility representatives can also hold meetings with the community during or after an event. LEPCs and TEPCs should ensure representatives of facilities become members and attend meetings regularly to discuss emergency planning and assist in conducting exercises to ensure that the plan can be activated during an event.

21.3 Health Professionals

Doctors, nurses and other trained medical professionals who serve in health departments, hospitals and private practices can be a valuable resource in emergency planning and response. They can also be an important source of information about risks to public health in their communities. Individuals from these organizations should be encouraged to join the LEPC or TEPC so they can be informed on potential hazards of chemicals to be prepared for treating people exposed.

There are many ways these professionals can help in meeting the goals of EPCRA.

- Volunteer to be a health professional representative in the LEPC or TEPC organization.
- Participate in programs to train medical personnel to deal with emergencies involving chemical hazards.
- Screen the information submitted under EPCRA to determine if acute or chronic health effects may be associated with hazardous substances in their communities.

EPCRA allows health professionals to gain access to chemical identity information, even if it is claimed trade secret, in three different situations:

1. If the chemical identity is needed for the diagnosis and treatment of an exposed person.
2. If a medical emergency exists in which the chemical identity is needed to aid in diagnosis and treatment.
3. If a health professional who is a local government employee requests a chemical's identity to conduct preventive research studies and to render medical treatment.