



EMERGENCY RESPONSE - Accidents like this gasoline spill in October, 1990 bring out the best in local emergency crews. But

there is no formal plan on how to deal with toxic spills and other now common events. (Post file photo)

Emergency

(continued from page 1)

This is the third such accident within the past two years on this stretch of Route 29 involving heavy trucks, according to Jackson Township fire chief and emergency management director Rollie Evans. Another tractor-trailer rolled over earlier this year and a triaxle (40-ton) dump truck met a similar fate last year, Evans said.

"There are many unwritten rules, things that emergency personnel are already doing," said Dallas firefighter Ted Wright, a state-certified firefighting and hazardous materials instructor.

"But we really need formal contingency plans, especially for accidents involving hazardous materials. For example, Route 29 was shut down for 20 hours last Thursday - could you imagine that on Route 309?"

Although state and federal regulations require all "first responders" (police, firefighters, ambulance personnel and road crews) to have hazardous materials (HAZMAT) training, many have taken only the basic four-hour course in recognition and identification of these materials, Wright said.

He knows of only two fire companies, Shavertown and Kunkle, where firefighters have

passed the 16-24 hour course in HAZMAT operations training. Wright taught it to them.

Two Dallas Township patrolmen, Brian Feeney and Doug Higgins, have also passed this course.

Many area fire companies usually call in Luzerne County Emergency Management (EMA) for technical assistance in hazardous materials incidents, Wright said.

Federal law recognizes 14 classes of hazardous materials, identified by 18 different warning placards which must appear in several designated places on the vehicle transporting them, according to the Pennsylvania Commercial Driver's Manual.

However, vehicles carrying less than 1,000 lbs. of these materials generally aren't required to post placards.

And vehicles carrying hazardous materials, with the exception of propane tankers, which aren't allowed through tunnels, can generally take any route that their drivers choose, according to Jackson Township assistant police chief Jerry Leedock.

"The local governments and fire companies should develop formal basic procedures which will not only help personnel at the scene, but also determine who will pay for

the cleanup and materials," Wright said. "We should sit down and discuss this while it's still fresh in our minds."

Kingston Township manager Jeff Box agrees. Hazardous materials accidents aren't usually included in municipal emergency plans, which are written more for dealing with another flood in the valley or a serious accident at the nuclear power plant in Berwick, Box said.

"I feel that the Traffic Management Association's incident management subcommittee should address these issues," Box said. "The lessons from our last three incidents should tell us to be prepared for more."

Faith Ann Liuzzo, community relations coordinator for the Pennsylvania department of Transportation (Penn-DOT), who has worked with the incident management subcommittee, said that hazardous materials incidents haven't been discussed in subcommittee meetings.

"At the initial meeting, the committee members indicated that they didn't feel that they needed it," she said. "I gave them copies of Penn-DOT's emergency detour book for the area, but the members weren't interested in much else."

Although the Back Mountain has many side roads which can be used for detours, Dallas Township police chief Carl Miers said that several areas of the Route 309-415 corridor are difficult to bypass.

For example, when a chlorine leak occurred at the water filtration plant on Hillside Road in late October, 1991, massive traffic tie-ups occurred. The only way around Route 309 between Hillside Road and the Luzerne exit ramp is a narrow, winding road over Bunker Hill.

Miers includes the high-tension lines on top of Bunker Hill and the underground transcontinental natural gas line which snakes underneath several area communities on the list of potential hazards.

He would like to see the entire Back Mountain form an emergency management committee, to develop procedures and pool tools, equipment and resources. Local emergency services agencies already have good working agreements with one another, Miers believes.

And Wright foresees more accidents involving hazardous materials as the Cross-Valley Expressway brings an increasing number of trucks through the area. "It will only get worse," he said.

2 incidents

(continued from page 1)

Southbound lanes of Route 309 were temporarily shut down until police were sure that there was no danger of explosion, according to Dallas Township Police Chief Carl Miers. No nearby homes or businesses were evacuated.

Dallas Township patrolman Brian Feeney was assisted at the scene by officers from Dallas Borough and Kingston Township, as fire engines, cruisers and a municipal snowplow truck were pressed into service to close the highway.

Less than 24 hours later, a tanker operated by Grant Nuby, 40, of Cincinnati, Ohio and owned by Hazmat Environmental Group, Inc., of Buffalo, NY, overturned on Route 29 near the intersection with Chase Road in the Bonkstown section of Jackson Township.

Jackson Township assistant police chief Jerry Leedock said that the truck was en route from the DuPont plant in Towanda to a hazardous waste disposal plant in Linden, N.J.

Police are investigating whether or not the driver had been assigned a specific route and if he had gone off that route, according to Jackson Township police chief Don Jones. Nuby was cited for careless driving, Jones said.

While cables strung from two heavy-duty wreckers to the tanker prevented it from sliding into the creek, emergency personnel waited nearly seven hours for a truck and crew from Hazmat Environmental Group to come from Buffalo to remove the liquid from the overturned tanker.

"We didn't spill a drop of material during the cleanup," said Dallas firefighter Ted Wright, who helped at the scene.

While the truck was being unloaded, residents of 12 nearby homes were evacuated to the Jackson Township fire hall, where the Red Cross served them coffee and sandwiches.

Jackson Township police, fire and ambulance personnel were assisted at the scene by police from Lehman and Plymouth townships and Harveys Lake and firefighters from Shavertown, Trucksville and Dallas fire companies.

This section of Route 29 has been the scene of three accidents involving tractor-trailers or triaxle (40-ton) dump trucks within the past two years, Evans said.

Harveys Lake recycling pickup day change

There will be no recycling at Harveys Lake Borough, Monday, Dec. 14. Monday's recycling will be picked up Tuesday, Dec. 15. Tuesday's recycling will be picked up Wednesday.

Dingle attends Planned Parenthood conference

Eric Dingle, Esq., of Trucksville was a voting delegate to Planned Parenthood Federation of America's 76th Annual Conference held October 21-25 in Chicago, Illinois.

Dingle is a member of the board of directors of Planned Parenthood of Northeast Pennsylvania. The non-profit agency provides family planning, counseling and medical services.

PTA award

(continued from page 1)

and the "Santa's Secret Shop," where students could buy inexpensive Christmas gifts at cost for friends and family members.

The PTA also funds each class's yearly field trip and a baskewtabl program.

This year the PTA has expanded the RIF program to second and third grades and added a special new school bus safety program, according to 1992-93 president Tammy McMahon.

"This has been a really super PTA over the years. You can't beat them," said Lehman-Jackson principal Charles James.

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