



NIEHS

Worker Education and Training Program

April 21-23, 2004
Washington, DC

Training Partnerships for Prevention, Protection and Preparedness: A Conference to Build Stronger Partnerships On Disaster Response Training

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MEETING NOTES FROM BREAKOUT 3: INDUSTRY AND TRADE ASSOCIATIONS

Thursday, April 22

Breakout 3: Industry and Trade Associations

Moderator: John Morawetz, Director, Center for Worker Health & Safety, International Chemical Workers Union

This breakout examined the partnerships between industry and the NIEHS awardees that have increased the number and quality of courses available for responding to WMD incidents and other emergencies. Dr. Carol Rice, a Professor from the University of Cincinnati and the Principal Investigator for the NIEHS-funded Midwest Consortium, provided a PowerPoint overview of the work the Midwest Consortium has done to build strong links to industries through training. She pointed out that even seemingly nonhazardous industries like American Dairy Brands still deal with industrial chemicals – in this case, ammonia – as a standard business practice. Lake Shore Community College, part of the Midwest Consortium, provides annual hazardous waste worker refresher training for this firm, along with chemical storage security training. The consortium also trains the Port Huron Hazmat team at a technician level to deal with hazardous materials transportation.

Dr. Rice's PowerPoint included testimonials about the value of training from managers at Neilson and Bainbridge, a Tennessee-based electroplating firm that experienced a fire in one of their production facilities. The consortium training had actually included table-top scenarios about how they would handle potential loss of acid tanks if there were a fire or other disaster. Consequently, they were prepared. They kept workers who did not need to be involved away from the response and provided outside emergency responders with timely and correct information about the chemicals potentially involved. The result: limited damage and no injuries. The consortium also regularly provides hazardous waste training for U.S. Oil Co, Inc., Ford Motor Company, and Technical Plating and Rubber, Inc.

Don Ritter, a member of the International Chemical Workers Union who works at the Cabot Corporation and the Security Manager from that firm, Matt Zimmerman, discussed the partnership at the firm between labor and management that has been so successful at protecting workers and the community. Mr. Ritter described an incident where the firm experienced a leak of sodium that local volunteer fire fighters responding to the emergency call were about to spray with water, which would have produced a potentially deadly reaction. Workers had been trained sufficiently to prevent the fire fighters from taking this action. The partnership now extends to local emergency responders and the plant does a full evacuation every 6 months and they stage a major event at least yearly.

The breakout session then conducted an exercise called "Industrial Disaster Preparedness" which built on the small group activity approach that has been a core approach of the ICWU training programs. The attendees were broken into groups and asked to discuss four questions and then designate one person to report back to the rest of participants at the end of the session. The four questions and the various responses from the groups are provided below.

Question 1: Why was the training partnership started?

Quite a few of the partnerships were identified as being formed to protect responders to emergencies at the facilities. The partnerships also came into being to provide more support and information to stakeholders outside the plant. In at least one case, it was a deliberate effort to involve labor in the development of an emergency response plan. More than one partnership formed after an incident occurred, causing a strong desire to prevent further incidents and to establish a procedure for getting to root causes afterwards. These partnerships were seen as natural ways to share expertise and therefore were mutually agreed upon. One participant noted that training under grants like NIEHS naturally leads to lasting partnerships through repeated contacts with key individuals. Being able to customize training enabled more organizations to justify partnering. Finally, the enabled and mobilized workforce that results from meaningful safety and health training makes partnership easier to form.

Question 2: Why do you think this partnership has been successful? What are some of the benefits?

Participants opined that the partnerships were successful because they involved all parties, shared resources, built trust, involved partners with complimentary backgrounds, established a level playing field, shifted the safety culture, allowed examination of root causes of incidents, and permitted nurturing of safety and health issues.

The benefits that came out of that success included more efficiency in operations, improved outreach to the community, better and quicker response capabilities, and better buy-in from all parties.

Question 3: What are some of the problems encountered during the development of the partnership?

Some in the discussion group indicated that management's tendency to assign individual blame for problems was counter-productive. Several found that outside help may be needed to resolve conflicts that arise in the partnership. Traditional rolls were also seen as obstruction and new partnership required new ways for labor and management to view their relationship and their combined efforts with outside responders. Jargon was seen as an obstruction, too, and participants agreed that information about worker safety and health needed to be clear. One participant indicated that when problems developed, a fortress mentality often resulted at facilities, which would invariably lead to more difficulties.

Question 4: What are some examples of catastrophic events you have planned for (both intentional and unintentional)?

The following list was generated by the participants of events that occurred at their facilities:

- ❖ Hydrogen fluoride vapor suppression failure
- ❖ Collapse of a building
- ❖ Hazardous materials transportation problem
- ❖ Ammonia release
- ❖ Sodium metal release
- ❖ Security problems
- ❖ Heat stress incidents

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