

West Chester Area School District

Hazardous Materials Emergency Protocol

I. **Purpose**

Hazardous Materials emergencies are rare, but when they happen they typically are a public event, often being referred to as ‘low occurrence but high consequence’. If a hazardous materials emergency occurs it requires immediate and coordinated response efforts to protect students, staff, property and the environment. Hazardous materials are used for a variety of purposes and are regularly transported via pipelines, trucks and rail through many areas in and around Chester County. While three of our school buildings, and district office are within 1600 to 3100 feet of the Sunoco Mariner 2 East Pipeline, all 18 of our buildings have the potential to be impacted by hazardous materials.

II. **Scope**

This document outlines additional responsibilities and duties as well as procedures for staff responding to hazardous materials emergencies. Hazardous materials safety protocol is one aspect of our safety procedures reviewed with staff, local police, and emergency responders.

III. **Responsibilities**

We have three school buildings (East Goshen, Exton, Penn Wood) and the district office (Spellman Education Center), within a half mile of the Mariner 2 East Pipeline, however all buildings in the district can be at risk in the event of a large leak, explosion, or release from multiple sources. The following procedures should be followed to prepare for a potential emergency:

- Familiarize staff and students with the location of nearby pipelines and transportation networks.
- Review the building safety and evacuation plan.
- Maintain a heightened sense of vigilance in identifying risks to nearby pipelines including unmarked digging activity or environmental changes and alert the pipeline company or law enforcement to prevent a hazardous materials emergency on behalf of student safety.

Leak Recognition and Response:

All the appropriate staff should be aware of their role in preparing for and responding to hazardous materials emergencies at their school. This includes school administrators, safety officials, bus drivers and any other key staff at schools located near underground pipelines.

Use your sense of smell, sight and sound to identify a potential hazardous materials leak. Indications of a leak may include:

- **Smell:** Strong petroleum scent or other pungent odor, a smell similar to rotten eggs, or sulfur, if odorant is added. (not all pipeline products have a smell)
- **Sight:** Dead or dying vegetation near the pipeline, pools of liquid or fire on the ground near the pipeline, dirt or debris blowing into the air, fire or a dense white cloud or fog.
- **Sound:** Hissing, gurgling, or roaring sound. (not all pipelines leaks will make a sound)

IV. Specialized Procedures

The following procedures will be implemented by staff/faculty when directed by the principal or when deemed appropriate by the situation.

The principal will determine the need to activate the Hazardous Material Emergency Plan, immediately notify 9-1-1, and direct staff to school shelter in place. The principal will remain the point of command until the first emergency responder arrives at the school.

The following steps are taken by the principal or his/her designee:

1. Incident Commander Actions (Principal)

- Call 9-1-1
- Consider reverse evacuation to bring all persons inside the building (if outside for activities, recess, PE, or after school sports)
- Notify Head Custodians to shut off HVAC systems
- Implement shelter-in-place procedures
- Notify the Superintendent of the status and action taken
- Activate communications plan during an emergency. Communications will be done via central office. That way the principal can manage events in the building.
- Be prepared to move from shelter-in-place to evacuation
- Document all actions taken
- Once First Responders are on scene (operate through unified command)
 - IF instructed to evacuate, follow evacuation route and guidance of incident commander/principal.
 - Leave the area immediately by foot, moving away from the release in an upwind direction.
 - Recommended evacuation distance is at least half mile from the breach.
 - Do not operate school buses, or any vehicles, mechanical equipment, cellular phones, electronic devices or any item that could create a spark near a suspected hazardous material leak, unless instructed it is safe to do so.
 - Do not allow staff and students to return to the building until proper authorities have determined that it is safe to do so

2. Staff Actions

- Implement the reverse evacuation procedure if students are outside; observe wind direction by observing flags or leaves and move students appropriately.
- Move students away from immediate danger. Any classes or students outside the building will move immediately inside.
- Follow shelter-in-place procedures when instructed by the building principal.
- Take attendance.

- Remain with students throughout the shelter-in-place process.
- Report any missing or injured students to the principal.
- Be prepared to move from shelter-in-place to evacuation quickly when instructed by the principal.
 - If evacuation is implemented, all classes, staff, and students will report to assigned evacuation area using primary or alternate routes. Observe wind direction by observing flags or leaves and move students appropriately.
 - Take class roster. Building safety team members will check that all students have left the building. Students are not to be left unattended at any time during evacuation process.
 - Teachers/staff will take attendance at evacuation area.
 - Leave the area immediately by foot, moving away from the release in an upwind direction.
 - Recommended evacuation distance is at least a half mile from the breach. Guidance should be provided by First Responder's.
 - Do not operate school buses, or any vehicles, mechanical equipment, cellular phones, electronic devices or any item that could create a spark near a suspected hazardous material leak, unless instructed that it is safe to do so.
- Do not allow staff and students to return to the building until proper authorities have determined that it is safe to do so.

V. Communications Protocol

- All school district administrators are registered for ReadyChesco Alert. Any hazardous materials leaks will be reported out immediately by the county.
- Once superintendent/principal is notified of a leak, the school immediately prepares for shelter in-place, with potential for evacuation.
- HVAC systems shut down to prevent outside air from entering the buildings.
- Central office will prepare message to send to parents via all call, listserv, and social media.
- Central office will notify bus company to prepare for evacuation site reunification site.
- Central office will notify parents of reunification site (could be return to building).