

What Are Hazardous Materials?

Hazardous materials are materials that:

- Corrode other materials.
- Explode or are easily ignited.
- React strongly with water.
- Are unstable when exposed to heat or shock.
- Are toxic to humans, animals, or the environment.

Hazardous materials are found nearly everywhere. We have them in our homes, in our workplaces, and on our highways.

We use so many hazardous materials that we have a tendency to forget that they pose a risk—to us, our property, and our environment.

How Are Hazardous Materials and Terrorism Related?

Terrorism and hazardous materials are related because most terrorist acts will involve hazardous materials of one type or another.

The major weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are all hazardous materials:

- Explosives
 - Biological agents
 - Chemical agents
 - Radiological and nuclear materials
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What Should CERT Members Do in Special Situations?

Even after completing the CERT classroom course, you will not be trained to respond to any situation involving hazardous materials. Containing, cleaning up, and disposing of hazardous materials takes special training and special equipment. CERT members should **never** attempt to respond to any incident involving hazardous materials.

As a CERT member, you should treat all known and suspected hazardous materials situations as **STOP** signs.

- Don't touch anything!
- Get away from the incident—uphill (if possible) and upwind.
- Warn others to stay away.
- Report the incident to 9-1-1 immediately.

Complete as many steps in the sizeup as you can from a distance. Do **not** attempt to respond.

What Should CERT Members Tell Responders?

When you call 9-1-1, provide as much information as you can about:

- What happened (as best you can determine).
- Where it happened.
- The number and types of known injuries.
- What is happening now.
- Who you are.
- Where you are.
- How you can be reached.

Never use a cell phone or two-way radio if you think that there is a risk from an explosive device!

What if You Become Contaminated?

If you think that you have been exposed to chemical or radiological contamination, leave the contaminated area. Use basic decontamination procedures to reduce your risk of injury and limit exposure.

- **Remove everything**, including jewelry.
 - **Cut off clothing** normally removed over the head.
 - **Wash your hands** before using them to shower.
 - **Flush your entire body** with **cool** water.
 - **Blot dry** with an absorbent cloth. Put on clean clothes.
 - **Report to responders** who will set up decontamination facilities.
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What About Treating Others?

Your personal safety is your first priority. During a hazardous materials or terrorist incident, take **self-protective** measures only. Do **not** attempt to treat victims in the contaminated area. Tell people who are leaving the area to:

- Use the basic decontamination procedures. (You can tell them what to do.)
 - Wait for responders who will perform complete decontamination.
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Lesson Summary

In this lesson, you have learned about:

- What hazardous materials are.
 - How terrorist incidents relate to hazardous materials incidents.
 - CERT protocols for dealing with incidents involving hazardous materials.
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