



U. S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board RECOMMENDATION STATUS CHANGE SUMMARY

Report:	West Fertilizer Explosion and Fire
Recommendation Number(s):	2013-02-I-TX-R13
Date Issued:	February 8, 2016
Recipient:	State Firefighters' and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas (SFFMA)
New Status:	Closed – Reconsidered/Superseded
Date of Status Change:	April 1, 2021

Recommendation Text:

Develop a fertilizer grade ammonium nitrate (FGAN) training certification program for fire departments that either have FGAN facilities in their jurisdictions or respond as mutual aid to other jurisdictions with FGAN facilities. The certification program should include multiple delivery methods to enable a broad reach. The certification program should allow for instructor-led, web-based, and train-the-trainer courses; initial orientation; and refresher training. The training also should accommodate both resident and mobile capabilities to facilitate flexibility in delivery.

The criteria for the certification program should address the following:

- a. Previous FGAN fire and explosion incidents, incorporating lessons learned*
- b. Hazards posed by other materials and chemicals stored near FGAN, including FGAN incompatibility with those materials and chemicals*
- c. Pre-incident planning for fires involving FGAN*
- d. On-scene emergency response and decision-making requirements for FGAN fires, including risk assessment, scene size-up, and situational awareness*
- e. National Incident Management System and Incident Command System.*

Board Status Change Decision:

A. Rationale for Recommendation

On April 17, 2013, an explosion and fire occurred at the West Fertilizer Company (WFC), a fertilizer blending, retail, and distribution facility in West, Texas. The detonation of fertilizer grade ammonium nitrate (FGAN) fatally injured 12 emergency responders and three members of the public. Local hospitals treated more than 260 injured victims, many of whom required hospital admission. The blast completely destroyed the WFC facility and caused widespread damage to more than 150 offsite buildings.

As a part of its investigation, the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Investigation Board (CSB) found that both Federal and the state of Texas curriculum manuals used for

hazardous materials (HAZMAT) training and certification of firefighters placed little emphasis on emergency response to storage sites containing FGAN. In addition, lessons learned from previous FGAN-related fires were not shared with other fire departments, including the West Volunteer Fire Department. If previous lessons learned had been applied at West, the firefighters and emergency personnel who responded to the incident might have better understood the risks associated with a FGAN-related fire.

As a result, the CSB made two recommendations to the State Firefighters' and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas (SFFMA). This status change summary pertains to CSB Recommendation No. 2013-02-I-TX-R13.

B. Response to the Recommendation

SFFMA explained that all 28 SFFMA certifications are based on existing National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, and that there is currently no NFPA certification pertaining just to FGAN. Creating a certification program independently would be a costly undertaking, and as such, SFFMA stated that it has never created and would not be creating a training certification program, as recommended by the CSB. Instead, it is SFFMA's intention to focus on basic firefighting curriculum and certification, part of which includes Haz-Mat Awareness and Operations per NFPA 472.

In addition, SFFMA plans to rely on the recently developed FGAN training program by the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) through a Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) grant. SFFMA's partnership with TEEX allows it to promote that new training, lobby for state funding to support it, and give credit for the training within the structure of SFFMA's existing certification program.

C. Board Analysis and Decision

After careful review and consideration, the Board concurs that SFFMA was not the appropriate recipient for this recommendation. Thus in accordance with existing CSB policy, the Board voted to change the status of the CSB Recommendation No. 2013-02-I-TX-R13 to: “**Closed-Reconsidered/Superseded.**”