



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-R14
Date Issued:	February 8, 2016
Recipient:	State Firefighters' and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas (SFFMA)
New Status:	Closed – Acceptable Alternative Action
Date of Status Change:	April 1, 2021

Recommendation Text:

Develop an outreach component for the training certification program that notifies regional, state, and local fire departments with FGAN facilities in their jurisdictions about the training certification opportunities available for FGAN. Ensure that the following items are included in the development of this program:

- a. Guidance for fire departments on how to identify FGAN hazards within their communities by engaging State Emergency Response Commissions and Local Emergency Planning Committees*
- b. Encouragement for members in jurisdictions with FGAN facilities to become certified in FGAN training*
- c. Information on training partners and programs that provide FGAN training.*

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 issued two recommendations to the State Firefighters' and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas (SFFMA). This status change summary pertains only to CSB Recommendation No. 2013-02-I-TX-R14.

B. Response to the Recommendation

SFFMA explained to the CSB that they would not be creating a training certification program, and SFFMA would instead rely on the creation of a FGAN hazards training curriculum program produced by the Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) and the Texas Commission on Fire Protection (TCFP). SFFMA's partnerships with TEEX and TCFP would allow his organization to promote the new FGAN training, lobby for state funding to support it, and give credit for the training within the structure of SFFMA's existing certification program.

SFFMA provided the CSB with a copy of the flyer that has been posted on the SFFMA website and distributed through the TEEX marketing personnel. SFFMA also provided the page that has a link to the flyer its website.¹ The action taken by SFFMA on the recommendation does not precisely meet the Board's recommended action, as SFFMA did not create its own FGAN training certification program as required by a separate recommendation. However, SFFMA does appear to support and promote the FGAN training that was created by TEEX which had the same outreach requirements as those recommended to SFFMA.

C. Board Analysis and Decision

While actions taken by SFFMA do not precisely meet the language contained in the CSB recommendation, the Board determined they are consistent with regards to an outreach component that promoted FGAN hazard training for firefighters. As such, the Board voted to change the status of CSB Recommendation No. 2013-02-I-TX-R14 to: **“Closed – Acceptable Alternative Action.”**

¹ See <https://www.sffma.org/training/>.