



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

Report:	Little General Propane Explosion, Ghent, WV
Recommendation Number:	2007-04-I-WV-R4
Date Issued:	September 25, 2008
Recipient:	West Virginia Offices of Emergency Medical Services (WVOEMS)
New Status:	Closed – Acceptable Action
Date of Status Change:	December 29, 2015

Recommendation Text:

Revise the Office of Emergency Medical Services rules and codes to require annual hazardous materials response refresher training for all emergency medical personnel in West Virginia.

Board Status Change Decision:

A. Rationale for Recommendation

On January 30, 2007, a propane explosion at the Little General Store in Ghent, West Virginia, killed four people and seriously injured five others. The fatalities and injuries included both workers and emergency responders. The explosion occurred during a propane transfer from an existing tank to a new tank. The CSB investigation found that while an unsupervised junior propane service technician was preparing to transfer propane, he fully removed a safety plug from a malfunctioning liquid withdrawal valve. This caused an uncontrollable release of propane into the area and the store. Approximately 30 minutes later, the gas ignited and exploded, leveling the store.

Two Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) responded to the incident scene. They provided medical aid to a propane technician who received a thermal burn due to frostbite from the escaping propane. Following the orders of the Incident Commander (IC), the EMTs began assisting with other emergency response activities prior to the arrival of additional firefighting personnel. The explosion occurred while the EMTs were performing these activities, killing one and seriously injuring another.

The CSB found that the emergency response personnel were unaware of the severity of the emergency as propane released uncontrollably into the store. The responders lacked awareness level training that would have helped them recognize hazardous materials emergencies and take appropriate action, such as protecting themselves, calling for trained assistance, and securing the area.

The West Virginia Office of Medical Services (WVOEMS) is tasked with operating a comprehensive statewide Emergency Medical Services (EMS). It oversees licensing for EMS agencies and training and certification for responders, including EMTs such as the one killed in this incident.

Annual hazardous material training is typically consistent with the requirements of OSHA's *Hazardous Waste Operation and Emergency Response* regulation (29 CFR 1910.120) as well as EPA's *Worker Protection Standard* (40 CFR 311). During its investigation, however, the CSB found that WVOEMS rules and codes did not require annual hazardous material responder refresher training for all EMS

personnel in West Virginia, as required in EPA and OSHA regulations. The CSB therefore issued a recommendation to address this shortcoming.

B. Response to the Recommendation

On February 1, 2013, WVOEMS approved a new policy requiring all state EMTs to have four hours annually of HazMat Awareness training, equivalent to OSHA's 1910.120 training requirements.

C. Board Analysis and Decision

As WVOEMS appears to have met the intent of CSB Recommendation No. 2007-04-I-WV-R4 with the adoption of an internal policy that requires state EMTs to receive at least four hours of HazMat Awareness training annually, equivalent to OSHA's 1910.120 (HAZWOPER) training requirements, the Board changed the status of this recommendation to: "**Closed—Acceptable Action.**"