

Dallas County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) Minutes of the General Meeting

May 22, 2023

Meeting Host/Location:

City of Garland Administration Building - 1500 State Highway 66 Room 417 Garland, TX 75040. A meeting agenda was posted, and the proper public notice was given in advance of the meeting.

Meeting Attendees:

James Pogue, Fred Grippe, Scott T Forster, Sam Friar, Amber Gardner, Anwan Johnson, Jennifer Bettis, Erin Buttitta, Melissa Rascon, Chris Yangman, Tina Sanders, Jennifer Moreno, Josh Tincopa, Laura Sifuentes, Ruby Valles, Jason Block, Hannah Myers, Richard Faulkner, Sarah Haak, Andy Median, Patrick Harwell, Nadia Avalos, Madison Sims, Tyler Eikelberger, Mariah Phipps-Jack, Adam Traylor, Sandra Long, Elliot Reed, Taylor Conti, LaRacheal Lacy, Cindy C. Triplett, Colin Willingham, Tomeka Statem, Luke Parten, Phyllis Jones, Mari Carmen Palomares, Matt Lamunion, Lauren Trimble, Clarence Hutchins, Denisse Martinez, Richard Faulkner.

Meeting:

Chief Scott Forster begins speaking at 1:36 p.m., introduces himself and explains due to not having a chair or a vice chair of the LEPC he is facilitating the meeting. Asks everyone in attendance to introduce themselves in the room.

Chief Forster proceeds for approval of the December 1, 2022, meeting minutes. He gives the audience a few minutes to review. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Elliot Reed and seconded by Adam Traylor. The minutes were approved as written by unanimous consent of the members present.

Chief Scott Forster nominates Denisse Martinez to be the LEPC chair due to historically, the Hazardous Material and Technology Manager of Dallas County being the chair, motion carries and members approve Ms. Denisse Martinez as the new chair.

Denisse Martinez thanks everyone and asks everyone to be on the lookout for surveys for potential speakers or nominations since there are open positions in the LEPC committee. She then goes on to introduce the first speaker of the day Mr. Fred Grippe, of Elm Fork water treatment plant (WTP).

Fred Grippe introduces himself and represents the Elm Fork WTP. His presentation focuses on Emergency communication and evacuation. Elm Fork WTP is one of the three water treatment plants Dallas uses for water. Mr. Grippe gives some background on the facility and describes while they are part of Dallas, they reside in Carrollton and can produce 310 million gallons of water within 24 hours with construction ongoing to improve water production to 450 million gallons. Produces clean water not just for Dallas but 23 other cities as well. The focus is what the response side of the plant will be in a potential disaster situation and what challenges they discovered during drills, with communication, projects to address challenges, local government agreements, and mutual aid.

The Facility has two regulated chemicals under the Clean Air Act which are Chlorine and Ammonia. They store up to 4 railcars of 90-ton gas, three are stored in the building with a chlorine scrubbing system. System can deal with one full railcar of gas and has two fixed 40-ton tanks of gas with an administrative control to only fill those up to 85% maximum of storage capacity which comes roughly to 34 tons stored in these tanks.

Similar situation with the Ammonia tanks 2 20 tons, 85% control on these also meaning about 17 tons per tank maximum. This is also under an active water scrubber system, so long as water keeps flowing then they can continue to scrub as much ammonia as needed.

Mr. Grippe then shows a map of the facility location and the proximity to several points of interest, including downtown Dallas and the airport. Followed by a worst-case scenario map if a railcar were to be uncontained release outside, he does note however this simply covers a radius around the facility because wind direction can greatly alter the calculation of the plume and direction the gas going towards.

They do have a response team, 40 hours trained hazwoper on standby. Goes into detail about current plan and to approach upwind from the north while constantly monitoring as they go along, along with monitors that are around the facility. They do have an emergency response room to suit up for the level containment. Two different types of leaks by their definition; a minor and major leak. Minor leaks can still be contained by isolating part of the system or closing a valve. If minor, then they continue to report back to their incident management team while working to resolve.

If it's a major release, then they're going to take a defensive position and call Dallas Hazmat. When Dallas Hazmat arrives then they become the Incident commanders when they arrive on scene. Does have it written in the risk management plan that the WTP can continue to work with Dallas Fire department due to the high level of familiarity with the facility and provide support as requested.

For evacuation they have two evacuation points is due to the wind direction. This is to improve safety and keep away from the chemical cloud. Along with two further evacuation points further than the original proposed ones if needed.

Inside plant communication they have multiple radios for communication and multiple channels due to the P25 upgrade. Does have pre-established channels and procedures to prevent cross talk of different teams. Plant super attendant makes the decision to evacuate, shelter in place, or move to the secondary evacuation point. Everyone that isn't part of HRT is required to evacuate the building unless specifically told not too by the plant super attendant. Reason is because if there is a release, they can continue to work from another building and prevent water from being contaminated by a potential release.

Challenges discovered is that because they are Dallas yet reside in Carrollton any 911 on cellphone goes directly to Carrollton dispatch who does not have the team members to deal with a potential chemical release. Any 911 calls from facility phones goes directly to Dallas, so they must train personnel for this. For personnel such as mechanics or engineers, they have the greater potential to forget this information. Some of the big challenges found smaller ones like the night shift due to the plant being open 24 hours means they don't have a hazard response team. Have been working with Dallas Fire to close some of these gaps, some of the goals are to create clearer communication, and flip books found at the operator's desk to say exactly what information dispatch needs to know. Tried using the Call Aid Dispatch notes (CAD) to help with some of these efforts and found it didn't work. Only notes that dispatch can see are based off address rather than key words or phrases. Gave folders to Dallas Hazmat team to know layout, chemical type, chemical quantity, and location. Also put in their 24-hour operations number, plan management personal number, and Mr. Grippe's home number for the team to have the contact information available. Trying to figure out how to update contact info in the event someone moves onto a different position.

Also made a discovery that Carrollton fire was not being brought into the loop if a disaster occurs which is also an issue. Looking into putting this issue by using address notes to let dispatch know what to do!

Interlocal agreements with other cities. Plano will respond if Dallas currently can't. Both Dallas and Plano have been invited to participate in these drills. New Midland C kits won't fit on the valve on the railcars. Between both stations they spend about three days on training.

Mr. Fred Grippe thanks everyone for attending and talks about how improvements have been made when he first started working at that plant about 7 years ago compared to now.

Ms. Denisse Martinez briefly explains that Captain John Stevenson was called away at the last minute, Ms. Martinez proceeds to introduce Ms. Tina Sanders of Texas 811 as the next speaker.

Tina Sanders introduces herself and represents Texas 811. Her presentation focuses on Pipeline damage prevention and safety, especially when dealing with wildfires. She begins by clearing some misconception about 811, it is the hub between the excavator who dug up the area and the facility owners such as ATMOS or AT&T. This where the public can call so they can safely dig up these areas and know what's underground and to watch out for these underground facilities.

She continues and explains the gap between when there is a drought to getting that water to the location needed for wildfires; all these examples on how 811 can become a hub and coordinating with the COG to make this more practical. Part of the ICS process to simply get that information of an incident to then push that notice to the owners of said underground assets to notify them.

Wildfire mitigation and how using a firebreak could potentially takeout communication in an area and leading to a compounding disaster. Other potential underground assets that might be accidently uncovered to make matters worse are natural gas, fueling stations, oil, etc. There are tons of opportunities to improve communication to help prevent these incidents and having everyone on the same page of information. Getting those facility owners as points of contact to get their emergency plan for said facility, what's in the facility and quantity, and how to effectively respond for increased safety.

Ms. Sanders talks about the importance of getting the bounding box filled out so the notice can go out to those potential actors to ensure safety of personnel, equipment, and facilities. Making sure first responders know how to notify 811 when an incident occurs to keep everyone on the same page. Also provided a map to show the large growth of these types of facilities and how easy it could be to accidently cause more problems if people are not aware of the situation from all parties.

Ms. Sanders also handed out cards to try and promote these conversations with contractors about what happens if these facilities are potentially damage and with first responders on who is going to be that point of contact. So many people have retired or left after COVID so either renewing that point of contact or having to forge new contact points is extremely important to ensure those emergency response plans are put in place before an actual disaster happens. 811 has created a new ticket called a wildfire ticket to help the notification process and create a bounding box to give that information to the incident commander such as the location, type of facility, point of contact, which county it belongs too, and the facility owners knows who to reach back to rather than just dispatch. They are trying to promote more participation from these owners of the underground facilities to be exposed to these drills and contact information.

Ms. Denisse Martinez thanks Ms. Tina Sanders for the presentation and opens the floor to any public questions or comments. Also. Thanks, the City of Garland to host this LEPC meeting and asks if anyone else is interested in hosting to please let the LEPC know.

Public Comments:

No comments were made once this presentation had concluded.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:57pm.

Submitted by:

Richard Faulkner, Office Support Clerk II, Dallas County Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Management.