

Emergency Responder Interaction Guidance

When summoning help from emergency responders (police, fire, or ambulance), follow this protocol to speed the response.

To provide an effective response to an injury in which hazardous materials are involved, emergency responders must first protect themselves from the hazardous materials release before attending to the injured person. Chemical contamination must be removed from the victim's body by use of a safety shower or other effective means, regardless of the nature of the hazardous material. Afterward, provide a lab coat or other clothing for the victim to wear if their personal clothing was removed. If possible, the victim should then proceed to an area of refuge (designated ahead of time by your department or identified during the emergency) away from the contaminated space, and wait there for the responders to arrive.

When speaking with the 9-1-1 operator, state the chemical name slowly and spell it out. Describe the location and the incident scene accurately. Do not use the term "explosion" if what occurred was actually a vessel over-pressurization (rupture) - response crews are trained that one "explosion" might lead to others, causing them to delay their entry.

Upon arrival, the emergency responders will have an Incident Commander (IC) in charge of the incident. Do not overwhelm the IC by allowing many people to approach him/her. Instead, designate a single, knowledgeable individual (the "UC representative") to meet the Fire Department crews and provide them with information and directions to the incident. Others should provide their information to the UC representative who, in turn, will provide the information to the IC, resulting in clearer information sharing.

Whenever possible, provide a printed copy of the Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) for the chemical(s) involved. To obtain an MSDS, go to www.ucmsds.com.

Media Contact

If the incident may generate media involvement, contact the UC Berkeley Public Affairs Office – Media Relations (642-3136) and provide a brief overview. If you are asked questions by reporters, refer them to Public Affairs Office – Media Relations (642-3136).

Post Incident

Before the Fire Department leaves a hazardous materials incident, they will hold a "Tailgate Meeting" to review the response and discuss any lessons learned. If you believe you have information to add, check in with the UC Berkeley representative to see if it is appropriate for you to be involved in this meeting.

Notify EH&S at ehs@berkeley.edu or 642-3073 so that EH&S can follow-up with the responders and other agencies, and work with the department to ensure this type of incident can't happen again.

