



MEMORANDUM

Date: April 24, 2023

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: Jan Lesher 
County Administrator

Re: **I-10 Hazardous Materials Incident Executive Summary**

On February 21, 2023, Pima County Office of Emergency Management Director (PCOEM) Shane Clark provided the Board of Supervisors an overview of what was known to have occurred related to the hazardous materials spill that took place on I-10 on February 14, 2023. He concluded his report by noting, *"...it is too early to discuss all the factors involved in this incident. Internally departments are starting their hotwashes just as OEM has conducted an internal review. I have communicated with DPS and TFD asking their intentions for an after action process. At a time later more information will be presented which will include strengths, challenge, and recommended improvement areas."* A copy of those comments is provided as Attachment 1.

On March 14, 2023 PCOEM hosted an After Action process. Session 1 was comprised of first responders and focused on the operational response. A second session was expanded to include community stakeholders and support agencies. The information ascertained in those sessions was used to create the After Action document, which was then reviewed by those who held incident command roles.

On April 21, 2023, Director Clark submitted an Executive Summary of the After Action Report (ARR), which summarizes what occurred when. The Executive Summary is attached (Attachment 2). In this report, Director Clark notes, *"No incident response is ever perfect. Lessons are learned and reinforced. Agencies and departments appropriately review and revise their internal policies and procedures, leading to more comprehensive preparedness for the next emergency. It is already being witnessed that lessons learned are being shared among partners, collaboration and coordination enhances community preparedness. Relationships and networking are being reinforced. Areas identified included communication interoperability and PCWIN is working with agencies to improve this area. Information sharing with leadership while timely needs to be more structured and a Situation Report, a successful tool used for multiple day or large incidents including wildfires, will be a model moving forward. Communication with critical stakeholders was identified as a factor and OEM is taking led to create a process for a cooperator call. And a review at the departmental level of internal procedures to improve timely receiving and distributing of public facing information is underway."*

When the composite AAR is completed by the incident command, DPS, information will be provided to the Board of Supervisors.

Attachment

c: Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Francisco García, MD, MPH, Deputy County Administrator & Chief Medical Officer
Steve Holmes, Deputy County Administrator
Shane Clark, Director, Office of Emergency Management

ATTACHMENT 1

Chair Grijalva, members of the Board, with permission I would like to provide an overview with what we understand at this time.

Good Morning, First, our hearts are heavy for the loss of life related to the accident, our condolences to the families.

On February 14th at 3:04 PM, the Pima County Office of Emergency Management was notified that 1st responders had arrived at the scene of an accident involving hazardous material on Interstate-10 between Kolb and Rita Roads. The spill was later confirmed to be Nitric Acid of unknown quantity. Multiple law and fire agencies were enroute under mutual aid request.

Later OEM was informed that Unified Command had been established with Arizona Department of Public Safety, Tucson Fire, Tucson Police, Pima County Sheriff, and the Arizona Department of Transportation and that DPS was Incident Command, and Tucson Fire was handling the hazardous materials response as the scene was located within city limits. Later they would be joined by DPS HazMat specialists.

It should be noted that 1st Response Agencies and emergency managers are trained to the National Incident Management System and the Incident Command System. This foundation for a common system across the nation was established after 9-11 by then President Bush under Presidential Directive.

It establishes that when an incident occur, like in this case, the jurisdictional law enforcement and fire department are responsible for managing the incident. As they require more resources they activate mutual aid agreements. The role of Emergency Management is to serve the needs of the Incident Commander with resources beyond their control.

Hazardous Materials incidents are some of the most complex to manage. They occur infrequently and require specialized training, a specialized team of Hazardous Materials Technicians to handle. They require early recognition and rapid decision making if it is determined that the public can be at risk of exposure. At the same time they are methodical as the type of hazardous materials dictate the personnel protective equipment required to contain and control, and the additional resources required to clean up the spill to ensure safety of all.

What OEM has learned at this time:

- DPS arrived on scene at 2:44 PM and closed I-10 at 2:56 PM.
- The wind moved the plume cloud to the north/northeast.
- Due to plume movement, there was a decision by Command to evacuate a school, a large industrial complex, and trailer park. One resident in close proximity to the accident was also evaluated.
- More resources arrived to assist with evacuation, and traffic control to close off the Interstate and route traffic to surface streets.
- There was an additional fire at the scene that was extinguished.
- Weather was a factor during the incident, this included wind, rain and snow. The National Weather Service provided updates.
- For those that drove through the plume in the early minutes of the accident exposure was very minimal. Arizona Poison Control has stated that someone would need to be within feet of the accident of a prolonged period of time to be exposed. They also stated any chemical unlikely traveled that far.

- Operations continued throughout the night. Agencies were requested to move loads of dirt to cover the spill.
- The investigation is on-going.

The Office of Emergency Management is NOT a first response agency and were advised by Tucson Fire at 3:04 PM with no requests for support.

At 3:25 PM OEM was requested to coordinate with Tucson Fire on a mass notification message to the public through our MyAlerts platform. The 1st message was delivered at 3:53 PM. FOUR more messages would be delivered during the operation to the populated area regarding shelter-in-place. This included rescinding the shelter-in-place at 8:03 PM and reinstating at 4:05 AM the next morning when the plume started again. The last message delivered was at 5:06 PM on February 15th.

County Administration was contacted immediately and updated throughout the operation.

OEM was not the only county department involved.

- Many departments received calls from concerned citizens.
- Media and other organizations were directed to contact DPS public information officer or PIO per their request as lead agency.
- Communications and OEM were in a DPS PIO managed communications group.
- OEM was in contact with PC Department of Environmental Quality.
- The Health Department was instrumental in working with the Arizona Poison Control Center and developing public messaging with support of Communications to educate the public to the hazards of the agent and measure to take.
- Communications opened a public facing webpage.

The scene remained active for approximately 27 hours and was terminated at approximately 6:00 PM on February 15th and I-10 was opened for normal traffic.

Notification of spill was submitted to the National Response Center. It was reported 3,575 gallons was spilled.

The last involvement from our Office was on Friday when my Community Outreach Coordinated conducted an media interview focused on MyAlerts.

While there are still remnants of the accident, the spill is contained with no reported environmental impact and remaining materials are to be removed.

I commend the efforts of the 1st Responders and support agencies involved in the operations. There were no lives lost or injuries directly related to the hazardous materials spill or the plume. While the scene was successfully controlled and mitigated, there will be lessons learned that will strengthen our community in preparedness, in communications, and in response.

As Ms. Leshar stated earlier, it is too early to discuss all the factors involved in this incident. Internally, departments are starting their hotwashes just as OEM has conducted an internal review. I have communicated with DPS and TFD asking their intentions for an after action process. At a time later more information will be presented which will include strengths, challenges, and recommended improvement areas.

Pending questions. Thank you that ends my summary.

ATTACHMENT 2



MEMORANDUM

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

To: Jan Lesher
County Administrator

Date: April 21, 2023

Francisco Garcia
Deputy County Administrator

From: Shane Clark
Director

Re: I-10 Hazardous Materials Incident Executive Summary

The Nitric Acid spill started on February 14, 2023, on Interstate 10 (I-10) eastbound between Rita and Kolb roads when a commercial truck, operating under the authority of Landstar Inway Inc, hauling a box trailer rolled over into the median. The initial 9-1-1 call was received by City of Tucson Public Safety Communications Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) and transferred to Arizona Department of Public Safety's PSAP as the Authority Having Jurisdiction (AHJ). Multiple callers reported the accident, and several reports indicated an orange cloud.

First on-scene was a commuting Border Patrol Agent, who took the initial steps to block lanes on I-10. Subsequent units arrived from Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS) and Tucson Fire Department (TFD), where Unified Command (UC) was established.

DPS which would later include their Hazardous Response Unit, TFD Hazardous Material Team, Tucson Police Department (TPD), Pima County Sheriff's Department (PCSD), and the Marana Police Department (MPD) coordinated efforts to mitigate the incident and evacuate a perimeter around the area of the incident. I-10 was closed in both directions between Rita and Kolb roads at approximately 2:43 p.m. on Tuesday, February 14. Both directions remained closed until approximately 3:15 p.m. on Thursday, February 15. Unified Command coordinated with Pima County Office of Emergency Management (PCOEM) throughout most of the incident to broadcast shelter-in-place messaging via IPAWS (Integrated Public Alerts and Warnings System) for individuals within the established perimeter coordinates. Pima County Communications Office, Pima County Health Department (PCHD), DPS, and various media outlets and partner agencies disseminated Informational messaging to the public.

Shelter-in-place protective actions were issued throughout the incident response. Utilizing street names to more easily identify the defined area, the shelter-in-place boundaries were east to Houghton Road, west to Kolb Road, north to Valencia Road, and south to Voyager Road. The public received communication of boundaries at 3:53 p.m. on February 14 and were lifted the same evening at 8:03 p.m. Due to inclement weather conditions reacting with the hazardous material, shelter-in-place was again recommended at 3:41 a.m. the second day with final lifting at 5:06 p.m. Pima County departments

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created avenues for the public to seek information: Pima County Communications Office created the webpage, pima.gov/acidspill, and PCHD managed phone calls on the Disease Control line in addition to calls on the main line. Pima County Department of Environmental Quality (PDEQ), Pima County Department of Transportation (PCDOT), and PCOEM also answered calls from the community.

Responders worked continuously throughout the operational period(s) to mitigate the hazard and maintain protective actions. The nitric acid was contained to the median on I-10. A steady flow of earth-moving equipment delivered dirt and covered the contaminated area while crews continued to mitigate the active release.

The Vail School District was affected by the incident. Vail Academy was evacuated shortly after the incident onset due to the school's proximity to the release scene. Traffic congestion associated with the closure of I-10 placed strains on bus routing. Therefore, Vail School District decided to close all schools for the entire district the second day.

Additional impacts to the public included necessary rerouting of Sun Tran bus routes and modification to service times. In addition, surface street traffic rerouting was required and commuters experienced delays due to the I-10 closure. Emergency Medical Services (EMS) traffic was rerouted away from the area. Impacts were endured by medical facilities in the area requiring many of them to power off their heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning (HVAC) systems, affecting their facility operations. Some facility operations were adjusted, whether still handling walk-in patients or continuing to shelter-in-place. Throughout the incident, medical facilities reached out to partners seeking up-to-date information. The Arizona Department of Corrections was in the shelter-in-place designated area and also shut down HVAC units when recommended by first responders.

Response operations concluded in the early evening of February 15, 2023. Clean-up is ongoing, conducted via a contracted vendor by the hazardous materials transporter, and being overseen by Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT).

The Nitric Acid spill brought together agencies from across jurisdictions, partnering in response to incident priorities: life safety, incident stabilization, and property conservation. The response was technical in nature, with adverse weather conditions adding further complexity. Notwithstanding the intricacies, no known injuries or direct effects to the public or responders were reported. I commend the efforts of the first responders for their quick action to identify the problem, notify early, having an overabundance of caution to evacuate and shelter-in-place, while they continued to understand the situation. Their ability to request and embed resources like departments of transportation to bring in equipment and dirt ensured the spill was controlled and contained. Monitoring ensured the public was not exposed. Today there is an aggressive cleanup operation underway that will ensure all remnants of the spill are removed.

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Utilizing a Whole Community approach, the mission of the Pima County Office of Emergency Management is to provide emergency management capabilities to the citizens of Pima County. To support this mission, PCOEM will continue to plan, train, exercise, and promote the National Response Framework and best practices while striving for continuous process improvement.