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From: Meredith Brown <racer@lanl.gov>
Subject: Blue Alert: Expired Response Suits

Title: Expired Level A and Level B Response Suits

Identifier: 1999-OH-WVNS-013 Date: 8/12/99

Lesson Learned Statement: Emergency response teams must have a program element for monitoring the expiration dates for their Personnel Protective Equipment (PPE) and supplies. This could be part of a preventive maintenance or surveillance program, or a procurement or warehouse program that monitors shelf life.

In addition, when a team has members from a variety of organizations, a sponsoring organization needs to be identified to ensure that management functions and team activities are coordinated and scheduled.

New barrier fabrics such as Kappler's "Responder" do not have a specified shelf-life. However, serviceability must be validated by the end user through inspections and integrity testing of the suits on a periodic basis.

Discussion of Activities: On May 13, 1999, at the West Valley Demonstration Project, in preparation for a training course, level "A" (fully encapsulating) and level "B" (splash suits) suits used by the Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Response Team were inspected. In the early stage of the inspection, it was discovered that the suits inspected were older than the manufacturer's recommended lifespan of three years past the date of manufacture. Consequently, a complete inventory of all level "A" and "B" suits was initiated to validate the availability of useable suits. It was confirmed that all the suits on site were past the expiration date (based on the date stamped on each suit).

Analysis: The suits were between 5 and 8 years old. The suit that expired most recently had a shelf life that expired in 1997. The level A suits had been used when emergency response personnel responded to a small acid spill in a confined area in 1997. There were no impacts on the environment, safety and health of workers, the public, or onsite and offsite areas.

Resolution: The immediate actions taken were:

- an inventory was taken to assess the extent of the problem;
- local county emergency management was notified to be on alert for Hazardous Materials response to the WVDP;
- four level "A" suits and 3 level "B" suits were removed from the WVDP HazMat Response vehicle and replaced with newer suits; and
- the incident commander at WVDP was informed of the suit change out and the HazMat Team response

capability was re-established for the WVDP.

As a result of this occurrence, the management of the HazMat team was assessed, and the program will be modified to formalize team activities, define administrative and maintenance activities, and to provide documentation of team qualifications and training.

Priority Descriptor: Blue/Information

Functional Category: Emergency Management

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wilsonk@wv.doe.gov Authorized Derivative Classifier: Not Applicable

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Reference(s): OH-WV-WVNS-WVNSGEN-1999-0001; Operating Experience Weekly Summary 99-21