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INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS  
INTERNATIONAL HAZARDOUS MATERIALS RESPONSE TEAMS CONFERENCE  
HUNT VALLEY, MD  
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Thank you Chief Butters, for that wonderful introduction and to each of you in the audience for giving me the opportunity to speak to you today.

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) is a proud sponsor of this year's International Hazardous Materials Response Teams Conference.

And it's an honor to be invited to speak today to participate in celebrating your 25th year and honoring and recognizing the great achievements of Chief John Eversole.

John was a great friend to our agency. Ever ready with an answer to our questions and willing to offer advice on direction in areas others had not ventured before.

He led us to develop the curriculum on PIPELINE EMERGENCIES, before it was even a twinkle in our eyes.

He was one of a kind, and we will miss him.

As you know, PHMSA is a small agency with a huge mission – to protect people and the environment from the risks inherent in the transportation of hazardous materials, by pipeline and other modes of transportation.

We hold public safety as our highest value, and in particular, the safety of the emergency responder community on whom we depend so much.

Our partnership with the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) helps us remain in touch with your needs and hopefully to serve you better in what you do everyday.

No stakeholder group has more standing with us.

Increased production, manufacturing, and transportation of chemicals and energy products make it imperative that first responders have the knowledge and resources to deal with these substances before an incident occurs.

As time approaches for the reauthorization of PHMSA's hazmat program, naturally we think about our vision of the future and how we can improve on our public safety performance.

As a principle tenet in our plans for reauthorization, we feel it is important for us to continue to build on our enterprise strategy by strengthening our relationships with the emergency response community.

It is important to understand the capabilities you need to be ready for tomorrow and help you build them.

We all need to recognize the important changes that are occurring in our global environment.

American businesses are creating new technologies containing complex chemical compounds and products never before considered to be a safety risk.

These new chemicals could pose very unique emergency response challenges.

Only by working together to understand them can we be ready to help communities prepare.

Our concern is less "if" these new products can be moved safely, but "how" – and how can we contribute to making it happen easier and sooner.

PHMSA is refocusing its efforts to help build state and local government emergency response capabilities.

To deal with these challenges up front, we are looking to for opportunities to further reduce risks in hazmat transportation.

We are consider expanding on our use of integrity management concepts that have worked well in pipelines...

We are also looking to strengthen our partnerships with all of our stakeholders, to provide better information on actual risk – what commodities are moving where and in new patterns.

We need this information for you and to strengthen our field operations and enforcement.

We think there are opportunities to improve how we respond to complex incidents and to do better in taking and sharing lessons from accident investigations.

We know there are opportunities to use technology to expedite communications about hazards before you arrive at the scene of an accident, without depending on shipping papers in the cab of a truck that may be on fire.

But getting there will take planning.

We want to make it easier for emergency responders to apply for and receive the resources necessary to develop the tools and meet training needs.

We want to improve technologies to help you do your job better and give you what you need to more quickly mitigate incidents.

We know when something goes bad, it goes bad quick.

Emergency personnel need to have the resources to be able respond timely, adequately and safely.

As to the here and now, we are very pleased to assist you in establishing the National Hazardous Materials Fusion Center.

The Hazmat Fusion Center will provide a secure, web-based portal to serve as a data and information network for hazmat teams; first responders; federal, state and local agencies; and the private sector.

This initiative is the result of an enterprise approach, with people coming together to solve common problems.

However, the data collected and analyzed will only be as good as the data reported.

It is important that we all utilize the portal to share our information and experiences to enhance hazmat responder safety and improve decision-making for the prevention and mitigation of hazmat incidents.

PHMSA is excited about the Fusion Center and continuing its partnership with the IAFC.

We look forward to future projects and other opportunities to keep first responders safe and give them the resources and knowledge they need in order to improve the way they perform their jobs.

We are constantly seeking ways to improve our hazmat safety programs.

We emphasize doing so in a transparent manner, with the benefit of stakeholder input to produce practical approaches suited to the demands of an economy that depends on the efficient movement of hazardous materials.

The PHMSA “Enterprise Approach” to solving problems involves not only coming together with other Federal agencies or State and Local governments, but also our industry partners - - and all working together to enhance safety.

We must focus and prioritize our efforts on preventing incidents posing the greatest overall risk to the public, property, and the environment, and moderate the consequences of incidents that cannot be prevented.

As we move along, we will always welcome input from our stakeholders to tell us if we’re headed in the right direction.

We have learned that we can multiply the success of our efforts to improve safety by sharing responsibility and accomplishments with our stakeholders, both within the federal family, and each of you.

With your insight and input, we can continue to ensure that key transportation safety programs, and the issues surrounding them, get the attention they deserve.

Together, we can keep the nation’s hazmat moving safely, and move our economy to new heights.

But, before I leave the podium, let me remind you that the new Emergency Response Guidebook for 2008 is published and being distributed to fire, police and other emergency response personnel across the country.

The 2008 ERG has been updated to add, expand or revise information on how to use the guide during emergencies and new hazards not previously covered in previous ERG editions.

The guide is also accessible via the Internet, where it can be conveniently downloaded to laptops and personal digital assistants (PDAs) at any time.

I’d like to give a special recognition to Dave Sargent and George Cushmac of PHMSA and (Mr.) Michel Cloutier of the Canadian Transport Emergency Center for making the 2008 ERG a reality.

Congratulations to each of you on being selected to receive the IAFC HazMat Committee Chairman’s Award for your collective work.

Your efforts are another true example of the PHMSA’s “Enterprise” strategy - - multiple organizations coming together to achieve a common goal.

I would like to thank each of you again for having me here today.

All of us at PHMSA and across the Department of Transportation stand ready and willing to work with you, and are proud to be your partners in hazmat safety.

REMARKS

JOHNSON – IAFC Int'l Response Teams Conf.

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