

New Haven Area Special Hazards Team

In the summer of 2001 several area fire chiefs met in the New Haven Fire Department Chief's office and opened discussions on creating a special hazards team to address issues of hazardous materials and WMD. These discussions took on new urgency after 9/11 and it became clear that this was a necessity. Over the next several months the group looked at the best way to organize. The South Central Council of Governments (COG) voted in 2002 to authorize the fire chiefs from the 15 communities that made up the COG, to move forward with the concept and develop a plan.

The ultimate by-laws that were adapted organized the 15 communities into 4 geographic divisions. Each Division was organized around a fire department with an existing hazardous materials capability. The Divisions were "SOUTH" New Haven Fire, "NORTH" Wallingford and Cytec Fire, "EAST" Guilford Fire, and "WEST" Milford Fire. Other communities joined these core towns by providing personnel and assistance. This system slowly took shape and as equipment began to arrive in the region it was assigned to one of the Divisions. Each Division has a DECON Trailer assigned to a community in that Division and Level A capabilities.

This arrangement is a mutual aid system designed to bring assistance to any community in the event of a hazardous materials incident or terrorist event. Each Division can be deployed to help a community when the event exceeds that community's ability to handle the emergency with its own resources. The response is not intended to replace the routine request made to the Department of Environmental Protection for assistance in the cleanup of hazardous materials, but was intended to assist in those rare potentially catastrophic events that require immediate stabilization.

Early in 2006 the Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security adapted new regions dividing the State into 5 regions. The Department of Emergency Management and Homeland Security also indicated that it wished to recognize 5 regional hazardous materials teams including NHASH in Region 2. In January of 2006 the South Central Council of Government Board of Directors was advised of this change. The NHASH Board of directors voted in February 2006 to include all the communities located in DEMHS Region 2 as part of NHASH if they choose to participate. The Derby Fire Department has recently join NHASH as the "Valley" Division.

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