



December 26, 2014



NATIONAL TERRORISM ADVISORY SYSTEM

No active alerts



ASTHMA
INDEX
● 1



UV
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● 5

THREAT ANALYSIS

Unidentified chemical spills force hospitals to be prepared

Several recent incidents in which people suffered respiratory distress or other symptoms after chemical leaks have underscored the need for hospitals to be prepared to manage the arrival of patients who have been exposed to unidentified chemicals.

A mall south of Boston was evacuated on November 11 after several people reported an irritating odor and experienced difficulty breathing, coughing fits and headaches. Ten people were transported to local hospitals and the irritant was later determined to be vapor from a refrigerant leak at one of the vendor sites in the mall's food court. On October 27, a firefighter, three police officers and seven residents were taken to a hospital after being exposed to an unknown chemical leak in a Riverside, California, neighborhood. Five employees of a food processing plant in Pasco, Washington, were hospitalized in September after a substance later identified as anhydrous ammonia caused severe eye, nose and throat irritation. (Sources: [Emergency Services Coalition for Medical Preparedness](#), [Boston Globe](#), [NBC Los Angeles](#), [Tri-City Herald](#))

When a patient has been exposed to a chemical, healthcare providers should solicit detailed information about the substance from first responders and the patient, but must be prepared to treat the patient even if the substance and its toxicity are unknown. Most people injured by exposure to chemical incidents are harmed by inhaling toxins in gas or vapor form. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) outlines procedures that both prehospital and hospital providers can follow when managing a patient with exposure to an unidentified chemical. (Source: [ATSDR](#))

ACTION STEPS

1

Make sure you have protocols in place for managing patients who have been exposed to an unidentified chemical. The [ATSDR](#) advises that patients exposed only to gas or vapor with no material on skin or clothing do not need decontamination, but those who have wet or damp skin or clothing may require basic decontamination. The [Wireless Information System for Emergency Responders](#) (WISER) and the [Chemical Hazards Emergency Medical Management](#) library are two other free resources that provide protocols and treatment algorithms.

2

Review the signs of chemical exposure that may help guide treatment decisions even when the chemical has not yet been identified. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) outlines key clinical manifestations in [Unknown Chemical Exposure: Overview for Healthcare Professionals](#). Remember that odor is not a reliable indicator of toxicity.

3

Be aware that exposure to some chemicals may exacerbate underlying chronic conditions like reactive airway disease, chronic pulmonary and cardiovascular disease. Providers should be particularly vigilant in monitoring exposure symptoms of patients with these conditions, as well as children and the elderly. (Source: [VDH](#))

UPCOMING EVENTS

FRIDAY

26

Indianapolis Auto Show 2015
*Indiana Convention Center &
Lucas Oil Stadium*

**Cincinnati vs. Indy Fuel
Hockey Game**
Indiana State Fairgrounds

Wizard of Oz
*The Center for the Performing
Arts*

Saturday

27

Family Fun Tour!
Rhythm! Discovery Center

Indianapolis Auto Show 2015
*Indiana Convention Center &
Lucas Oil Stadium*

Wizard of Oz
*The Center for the Performing
Arts*

**Cincinnati Cyclones vs. Indy
Fuel**
Indiana State Fairgrounds

Sunday

28

Indianapolis Auto Show 2015
*Indiana Convention Center &
Lucas Oil Stadium*

Led Zeppelin 2
Old National Centre

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