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Hazardous Incident Response Team

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The San Diego County Department of Environmental Health Hazardous Incident Response Team (DEH-HIRT) consists of ten California State Certified Hazardous Material Specialists. The team was founded in 1981 by the Unified Disaster Council and is funded by a Joint Powers Agreement. This team services all unincorporated San Diego County areas, 18 municipalities, two military bases, and five Indian Reservations. There are over 400 responses a year in the DEH-HIRT operational area. DEH-HIRT responds jointly with the San Diego Fire & Life Safety Services Department, Hazardous Incident Response Team to investigate and mitigate chemically related emergencies or complaints. Emergency response activities include mitigation, containment and control actions as well as hazard identification, evaluating the threat to the local populations and the environment. DEH-HIRT is also responsible for handling all after normal business hours complaints for the Department of Environmental Health.



Joint Powers Agreement

The JPA is the organization that funds the HIRT. This organization is made up of representatives from unincorporated San Diego, incorporated municipalities, Military Bases and Indian Tribes. The response to all of these geographical areas will be made by combined team of DEH-HIRT and the San Diego Fire and Life Safety Services HIRT. We operate as a team!

Hazard Categorization (Haz-Cat)

Successful identification of unknown materials requires knowledge of what to look for and a sense of what to expect. One of the most important skills for the Haz-Cat user to develop is the ability to think in terms of chemical categories and probabilities. To gain this skill you must practice hazard categorization. There are various systems to identify unknown materials. DEH-HIRT utilizes a system that has over 20 reagents and is actually a mini laboratory. The process to identify unknowns will vary to the complexity of the substance. [Follow this link to "Name That Unknown"](#). In the demonstration provided you will see how to identify an unknown solid. Previous Haz-Cat contest winners are listed below.

- 2005 Champions Todd Burton & Dave Cammall, San Diego County DEH-HIRT
- 2004 Champions Nick Vent & Brad Long, San Diego County DEH-HIRT
- 2003 Champions David Cammall & Todd Burton, San Diego County DEH-HIRT
- 2002 Champions Nick Vent & Dave Cammall, San Diego County DEH-HIRT
- 2001 Champions Nick Vent San Diego County DEH-HIRT & Jim Williams Escondido FD

DEH-HIRT Other Duties

DEH-HIRT handles all after normal business hour complaints for the Department of Environmental Health and other designated agencies within San Diego County. Typical calls that we receive are: Sewage overflows to public water ways, foodborne illness investigations, restaurant fire investigations, asbestos and lead complaints, abandoned medical waste, water sampling, substandard housing complaints, vector control complaints, public swimming pool complaints.

Vehicles

DEH-HIRT has five fully equipped emergency response vehicles comprised of three four wheel drive trucks (outfitted with lift gates and heavy duty winches for hauling hazardous waste), a sampling van, and a command vehicle. Each one is fully equipped for up to a level "B" response and are stocked with the equipment necessary to make a level "B" response. Reference materials, computers, GPS, detection equipment (such as combustible gas indicators, radiation detectors, and haz-cat kits), and level "B" personal protective equipment are among the items stocked on the vehicles. Although DEH-HIRT is trained to make level "A" responses, the level "A" suits are maintained on the San Diego Fire and Life Safety Services HIRT emergency response vehicles.

Metropolitan Medical Strike Team (MMST)

Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) have existed for a very long time. In WWI the German army used chlorine gas as a WMD. Anthrax, Sarin, VX, BX, Soman, Mustard Gas, Botulism and Hydrogen Cyanide Gas are all tools of the terrorist trade. We have trained in conjunction with the FBI, SDFD, SDPD, Sheriff's, EMS, CDF, Military, Bomb Squads, area hospitals, Office of Emergency Services and many more to be as prepared as we can. The team is called the MMST (Metropolitan Medical Strike Team). The team has quarterly meetings and drills to improve our potential response. Once a year there is a full scale drill. In the past the drill has been held at the Qualcomm Stadium and at the Del Mar Fair Grounds. Military and students volunteer to be victims to make it as real as possible. The MMST is a group of San Diego's first responders assembled into a joint team to protect the people of San Diego. San Diego Hazardous Incident Response Team (SD County Haz-Mat & SD City Haz-Mat) are the critical haz-mat elements to this team.

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