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DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration

[Docket No. PHMSA-2017-XXXX-XXXX; Notice No. 17-XX]

Hazardous Materials: Revisions of the Emergency Response Guidebook

AGENCY: Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA),
Department of Transportation (DOT).

ACTION: Notice; request for input.

SUMMARY: The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration is accepting input on ways to improve the Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG) as it develops the 2020 version (ERG2020), particularly from those who have experience using the ERG. The ERG is for use by emergency services personnel to provide guidance for initial response to hazardous materials incidents. The development of the ERG2020 is a joint effort involving the transportation agencies of the United States, Canada, and Mexico.

ADDRESSES: An e-mail address has been established for interested persons to submit their input: ERGComments@dot.gov.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Stephen Martinez, Outreach,
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SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

A. Background and Purpose

The Federal hazardous materials transportation law, 49 U.S.C. 5101 *et seq.*, authorizes the Secretary of Transportation (Secretary) to issue and enforce regulations deemed necessary to ensure the safe transportation of hazardous materials in commerce. In addition, the law directs the Secretary to provide law enforcement and fire-fighting personnel with technical information and advice for responding to emergencies involving the transportation of hazardous materials.

The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) developed the United States version of the Emergency Response Guidebook (ERG) for use by emergency services personnel to provide guidance for initial response to hazardous materials incidents. Since 1980, it has been PHMSA's goal that all public emergency response vehicles (e.g., fire-fighting, police, and rescue squads) have immediate access to the ERG. To date and without charge, PHMSA has distributed more than 14.5 million copies of the ERG to emergency service agencies and developed free online and mobile apps to make the ERG more accessible. Since 1996, PHMSA, Transport Canada, and the Secretariat of Communication and Transport of Mexico have developed the ERG as a joint effort, with assistance of interested parties from government and industry, including the collaboration of CIQUIME of Argentina. The 2020 version (ERG2020) will be published in English, French, and Spanish.

Publication of the ERG2020 will increase public safety by providing consistent emergency response procedures for hazardous materials incidents in North America. To continually improve the ERG, PHMSA is publishing this notice to inform interested

parties of an open-ended method to relate their experiences using the ERG and recommendations on how it could be modified or improved.

In addition to this notice, PHMSA will publicize its interest in receiving input on the ERG2020 through future announcements to emergency responder associations, during training and education seminars, and during activities with State and local government agencies. PHMSA has established an e-mail address for interested persons to submit their input (see **ADDRESSES**).

B. Emergency Response Guidebook Questions

To assist in the gathering of information, PHMSA solicits input on ERG user concerns, experiences using the ERG2008 and 2016, and on the following questions. We are also interested in any other comments stakeholders and users wish to provide.

1. How can we make the ERG more user-friendly for first responders during the initial response phase of the incident? Please provide examples.
2. Does the ERG2016 effectively emphasize the most useful information for the initial response phase?
3. Have you found mixed guidance messages when using the ERG **and** other sources of technical information?
4. Are there ways we could improve the **White Pages**? For example:
 - Did you find the “How to Use this Guidebook” flow chart of ERG2016, page 1, useful to understanding how to use the ERG? Please explain why or why not.

- Do you believe we should reformat the tables, charts, and the information they provide (i.e., Table of Placards, Rail Identification Chart, and Road Trailer Identification Chart)? What changes do you think would make them more useful, clear, and easy to read and use?
 - What other identification charts should we add, if any? What other subject(s) should we address?
 - How could we improve the information the ERG provides on chemical, biological, and radiological transportation incidents? Can you suggest information to include or remove?
 - Do you find the terms in the Glossary appropriate and current? What terms should we add? What terms should we remove or change?
5. In the ERG2016's **Yellow or Blue Pages**, have you found any identification number and/or material name that seems to be assigned to an incorrect Guide number? If so, please note the identification number, material name, the Guide number, and suggest a new Guide number with your reasons why.
 6. Do the **Orange Guide Pages** contain recommendations and responses that are appropriate to the material they are assigned to? If not, please explain and recommend a correction.
 7. How could we change/improve the following **Green Page** Tables, their Introduction, or Description?
 - Table 1 – “Initial Isolation and Protective Action Distances”
 - Table 2 – “Water Reactive Materials Which Produce Toxic Gases”

- Table 3 – “Initial Isolation and Protective Action Distances for Different Quantities of Six Common TIH Gases”
8. When calling any of the Emergency Response Telephone Numbers listed in the ERG2016, have you experienced a busy telephone line, disconnection, or no response? If yes, please describe.
 9. What format(s) of the ERG do you use (hardcopy, electronic, on-line, mobile applications, etc.), and why?
 10. How often do you use the ERG in a dangerous goods transportation emergency?

In addition to the specific questions listed in this notice, PHMSA is also interested in any supporting data and analyses that will enhance the value of the input comments submitted.

Issued in Washington, DC, on

William S. Schoonover,
Associate Administrator for Hazardous Materials Safety,
Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration.