

Bexar County Office of Emergency Management

NEWS

For Immediate Release: Thursday, July 1, 2004

Contact: Yvonne Escamilla
Public Information Officer
(210) 269-3079

Chlorine Recovery Plan Update

Bexar County, TCEQ, EPA, and UP officials announced today revised plans to off load the damaged chlorine tanker that remains at the train collision site in southwest Bexar County.

Scheduled to begin today, the original plans called for a transfer of liquid chlorine to two empty chlorine rail cars brought to the site yesterday.

Responders on the scene are utilizing a method to safely process the chlorine in the damaged rail car into sodium hypochlorite (similar to household bleach). This method was the preferred safe alternative to unload the damaged rail car.

Once the damaged rail car has been completely emptied, the sodium hypochlorite will be transported safely back to the OxyChem plant in Ingleside, Texas.

Responders who devised the operation are confident that it can be done safely.

The foot long gash in the tanker is currently plugged with wooden plugs. The new plan begins with the removal of the plugs, replacing them with a pre-formed metal patch, then pulling the chlorine vapor through a sodium hydroxide scrubber to react with the chlorine to yield a less hazardous compound of sodium hypochlorite .

This process could potentially leave the damaged rail car in the area for up to six days. The EPA and TCEQ will remain on site to do air monitoring until the damaged car is removed from the site.

“This decision is a unified one made by all parties involved including UP, TCEQ and the EPA,” said Carl Mixon, Bexar County Emergency Management Coordinator. “This is the best way to ensure the safety of the community.”

“Our goal is to keep everyone informed and safe during this operation, “ said Mixon.

NTSB officials visited the site today as a part of their investigation.

