

North Country National Scenic Trail
“TAILGATE SAFETY SERIES”



HAZARDOUS MATERIALS ENCOUNTERS

Trail workers and users may encounter hazardous materials in the field. Hazmat encounters require special precautions and must be handled by trained professionals. Trail crews and hikers should be aware of their surroundings and able to recognize the signs of a possible hazmat encounter, and act accordingly to report the situation.

- Hazardous materials in the field include, but are not limited to:
 - Clandestine Drug Waste—waste as a result of “meth” labs, etc., which may look like common household trash at first glance. Drug lab waste may be identified by the presence of plastic or glass jugs, 5-gallon buckets, lab equipment (tubes and beakers), lye or drain cleaner containers, coffee filters, cold medicine packages, shredded lithium batteries, etc.
 - Midnight Dumping—may be recognized by the presence of barrels or other containers, discoloration of the land, plants or water, and/or dead vegetation or animals
 - Transportation Accidents—truck, rail, or pipeline accidents may result in spillage or release of hazardous materials which pose serious danger
- In all instances, self-protection is your primary responsibility
- Respond to all encounters by implementing the **Three R’s**:
 - *Recognize*: Watch for tell-tale clues of hazardous waste situations, noting any labels or hazmat symbols that may assist professional responders. Be personally aware that containers may be mislabeled, or that hazardous materials may exist in unlabeled containers
 - *Retreat*: Move upwind, upgrade, or upstream as you exit the area. This will minimize your risk of exposure to solid, liquid, or gaseous hazardous materials which may be present

- *Report:* Notify your supervisor, and/or report your observations to 911 or other local emergency response authorities. Warn others in the area of the potential hazard and keep the area safeguarded until professional responders arrive

References:

Incident Response Pocket Guide—PMS 461, NFES 1077, NWCG, <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/pubs/pubs.htm>

Safety and Health for Field Operations Manual, BLM—1112-2

Hazmat-First Responder Awareness Training Guide, Local Fire Department

Six Minutes for Safety, http://www.nifc.gov/sixminutes/dsp_sixminutes.php