

**PIERCE COUNTY  
HAZARD IDENTIFICATION & RISK ASSESSMENT  
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS HAZARD**

**Table of Contents**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS ..... 1**  
**IDENTIFICATION DESCRIPTION ..... 2**  
    DEFINITION ..... 2  
    TYPES..... 2  
**PROFILE..... 2**  
    LOCATION AND EXTENT ..... 2  
    OCCURRENCES ..... 4  
    IMPACTS..... 5  
**RESOURCE DIRECTORY..... 8**  
    REGIONAL..... 8  
    NATIONAL..... 8  
    INTERNATIONAL ..... 8  
**ENDNOTES..... 9**

# Identification Description

## Definition

Hazardous materials are materials, which because of their chemical, physical or biological properties, poses a potential risk to life, health, the environment, or property when not properly contained. A hazardous material release is the release of the material from its container into the local environment.

## Types

It includes materials that are explosive, flammable, combustible, corrosive, reactive, poisonous, biological or radioactive. They can be in a solid, liquid or gaseous state.

Of increasing interest is Bakken crude oil. This is due to a combination of the physical and chemical properties, and related hazards, combined with the fact that the very large quantities transported have the potential to create very large explosions, fires and environmental degradation of the environment. Prior to 2012 there were no trains carrying Bakken oil into or through Pierce County. Today that has changed. There are on average an estimated 15 trains of around 100 cars each week carrying Bakken Oil into or through Pierce County.

Note that there is a variation in the properties of crude oil since each oil field or even wells in the same oilfield will not produce the same type of crude oil.<sup>1</sup>

**Table HM-1. List of constituents or ingredients found in Bakken crude oil.<sup>2</sup>**

<u>Chemical Name</u>	<u>CAS#</u>	<u>Percent</u>		<u>Chemical Name</u>	<u>CAS#</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Crude Oil (Petroleum)	8002-05-9	100 by weight		N-Hexane	110-54-3	<5 by volume
Ethyl Benzene	100-41-4	<3 by weight		Xylenes	1330-20-7	<1 by weight
Benzene	71-43-2	<1 by weight		Hydrogen Sulfide	7783-06-4	<0.2 by volume
Naphthalene	91-20-3	0 - 0.9 by weight		Total Sulfur:		< 0.5 wt%

Crude oil, natural gas and natural gas condensate can contain minor amounts of sulfur, nitrogen and oxygen containing organic compounds as well as trace amounts of heavy metals like mercury, arsenic, nickel, and vanadium. Composition can vary depending on the source of crude.

## Profile

### Location and Extent

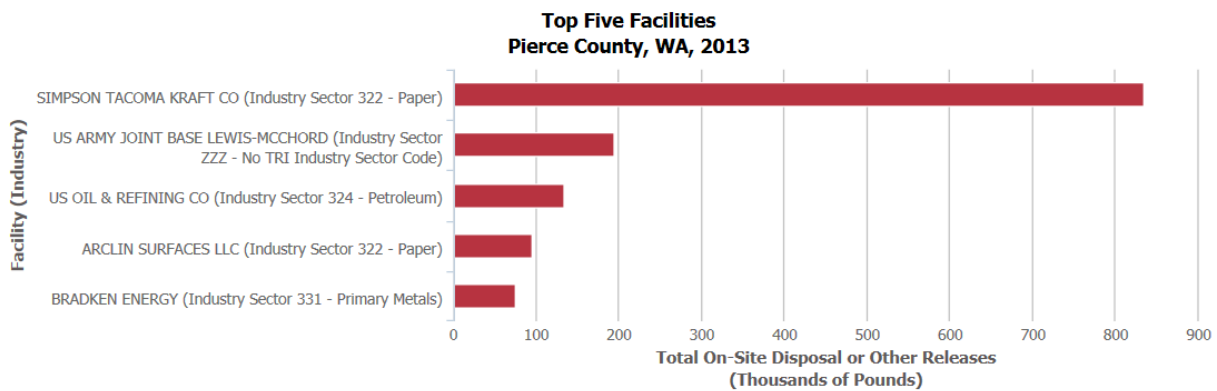
Hazardous materials incidents may be either generated from a fixed site or the result of a transportation related accident or release. Not included here are terrorist incidents or radioactive releases from a fixed nuclear facility (FNF). Hazardous materials used in terrorism are covered in the Terrorism chapter. As there are currently no local fixed nuclear facilities that would be an immediate threat through the release of material to Pierce County, they are not included in this chapter.

Hazardous materials are classified into four groups of chemicals under Title III of the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA Title III). These are:

1. **Extremely Hazardous Substances** – These chemicals have acutely toxic properties. Includes approximately 366 chemicals.
2. **Hazardous Substances** – Includes approximately 720 chemicals.
3. **Hazardous Chemicals** – Inventories of these chemicals and material safety data sheets for each must be submitted if they are present at the chemical facility in certain amounts.
4. **Toxic Chemicals** – Chemicals or chemical categories that appear on the list because of their chronic or long-term toxicity. Includes 325 chemicals.

Chemicals within these categories have different reporting requirements as to quantities on site that need to be reported. The reporting forms, Tier II forms, go to the Washington State Department of Ecology, the Local Emergency Planning Committee of Pierce County located at the Department of Emergency Management and the local fire department or district.

**Table HM-2. Environmental Protection Agency’s Identified Top Five Facilities.<sup>3</sup>**



## Occurrences

The defining moment in the control of hazardous materials is the December 1984, Union Carbide release of Methyl Isocyanate gas in Bhopal, India. This, the worst industrial accident in history, killed over 3000 people initially and left others blinded or with other handicaps. Over one million claims were made as to damages from the release, of which 574,366 people were awarded damages.<sup>4</sup>

Hazardous material spills are a regular part of response organizations operations in Pierce County. While most reported spills are relatively minor, such as small amounts of hydraulic fluid or diesel, there are occasional spills that tax response organizations. Notification of many small spills initially comes to the County from the Washington Emergency Management Division (WEMD), who may receive a notification from a citizen, a local jurisdiction, the Department of Ecology or the National Response Center, an office within the U.S. Coast Guard.

While there have been hazardous material releases in Pierce County, some of which have had fatal consequences, there has not been a truly large-scale incident that resulted in a number of deaths or injuries. This is also true when it comes to railroad accidents. Although there have not been any major hazardous materials derailments in Pierce County that have resulted in loss of life, there have been cases in Canada and other areas of the United States. With the rise of crude oil incidents, “crude oil emergency incidents have now become higher probability – high consequence events.” The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA) further indicates that there is a higher risk as seen with recent derailments and the resulting fires. There are two major derailments of significance, the first is the Lac-Mégantic, Quebec, Canada 63 car derailment on July 5, 2013 which resulted in the death of 47 people due to fire and other effects of the accident.<sup>5</sup> The other derailment was on April 30, 2014 in Lynchburg, Virginia where 17 of 105 tank cars fell into the James River, spilling almost 30,000 gallons of oil.<sup>6</sup>

The last two largest spills that have caused major problems within Pierce County are the February 12, 2007 Chlorine Spill in the Port of Tacoma<sup>7</sup> and the Dalco Passage Oil Spill of October 13, 2004.<sup>8,9</sup> Both of these required a major response by responders and in the case of the Dalco Passage spill took many days to clean up.

Figure HM-1 Exxon Valdez Oil Spill, 1989



HM-Table 3 Pierce County Spill Data from May 2018 to May 2019<sup>10</sup>

Incident Category	Number of Incidents
Oil	335
Pollution	82
Hazmat/Chemical	19
Drug Labs	7
Boat Sinking/Grounding	7
Rail	6
Vessel Casualty	3
Aircraft	1
Fire/Explosion	1
Total	461

## Recurrence Rate

Spills of small quantities of hazardous materials happen regularly. These can range from a meth lab being located and needing clean up to a diesel spill on the highway. Taking all these factors into account we could say that there are hazardous chemical spills annually. However, the large spills that could impact a significant portion of the public and create major economic or environmental problems are a five year, or less, occurrence.

## Impacts

### Health and Safety of Persons in the Affected Area at the Time of the Incident

Depending on the hazardous material(s) involved, the quantity, proximity of exposures and the current environmental factors during the time of the incident, the impact to persons in the affected area may range from negligible to fatal.<sup>11</sup> Initial reactions to inhaled hazardous gasses may include respiratory problems, burning sensation in the mouth, nose, and eyes, loss of consciousness, dizziness, suffocation and death. Some substances in a solid or liquid state can be absorbed through the skin. Others, like caustics and acids, may cause burns on contact. For some chemicals there are residual problems that might not present themselves for years. Some of these leave lung lesions or impact other internal organs. These may result in later development of emphysema or various cancers.

## Health and Safety of Personnel Responding to the Incident

Personnel responding to a hazardous chemical spill, if not properly protected, are subject to the same physical problems as the initial victims.<sup>12</sup>

## Continuity of Operations and Delivery of Services

Most hazardous materials spills will impact a limited area. If within that area are governmental operations that may be impacted, then there could be a decrease in the delivery of services. If the chemical is such that an area must be closed for a lengthy period of time or destroys the method of service delivery, then for the necessary services to be maintained new routing or a new method of delivery will need to be developed. If the spill impacts some portion of an agency or government directly then there may be a loss in operational continuity.

## Property, Facilities, and Infrastructure

Property, facilities and the infrastructure may all be damaged by different individual spills. Hazardous material spills may contaminate a facility so that it must undergo extensive cleaning, or in the case of some radioactive materials, abandoned permanently. They may ignite or explode, destroying any object in their proximity. They may corrode facilities or infrastructure leaving it in need of replacement.

## Environment

Environmental impacts can range from the relatively minor or short term, as are many of the spills that happen in the County, on an annual basis to those that cause major impacts over multiple years. Two major national incidents, the Exxon Valdez oil spill and the Cantara/Dunsmuir spill show how a major spill can damage the environment, sometimes for decades.

The damage in the aftermath of the 1989 Exxon Valdez oil spill has continued to plague the environment. While the actual death of wildlife has declined other issues have continued. Studies have shown that “lingering oil deposits affect species over many years...” In many species “sublethal, chronic doses compromise health, growth and reproduction...” This can have a cascade impact as the various “impaired species interact negatively with one another...”<sup>14</sup>

Figure HM-2 Dalco Passage Oil Spill Clean Up<sup>13</sup>



In the case of the Cantara/Dunsmuir chemical spill of July 14, 1991, 19,000 gallons of metam sodium, a potent herbicide and pesticide that is usually used to sterilize soil, spilled from a train tank car into the Upper Sacramento River. It killed off all aquatic life in the river and damaged the riparian habitat for 41 miles to Lake Shasta. Its initial reaction with water created a toxic cloud that kept responders away until it had dissipated.

Vegetative damage from the spill resulted in a sudden and catastrophic reduction in canopy cover and foliage along the river, with a corresponding dramatic loss of many wildlife species dependent on the river's riparian vegetation. Wildlife such as birds, bats, otters, and mink either starved or were forced to move because their food sources were no longer available.

Ultimately, over a million fish, and tens of thousands of amphibians and crayfish were killed. Millions of aquatic invertebrates, including insects and mollusks, which form the basis of the river's ecosystem, were destroyed. Hundreds of thousands of willows, alders, and cottonwoods eventually died. Many more were severely injured. The chemical plume left a 41-mile wake of destruction, from the spill site to the entry point of the river into Shasta Lake.<sup>15</sup>

The damage caused by both of these spills to the environment has taken many years to overcome and residual impacts may still be felt.

## Economic and Financial Condition

The economic consequences of a large hazardous material spill can be wide ranging and can last for years. Financial problems are dependent on the chemical(s) released; the size of the spill; the number and size of the businesses impacted; the number of homes impacted or destroyed; which pieces of infrastructure have been impacted; and, the complexity of, and length of time to complete, the cleanup. If the facilities have burned or the cleanup takes a lengthy period of time the economic losses are compounded. If the chemical(s) released do not allow cleanup, as a radioactive substance might, the economic impact could be permanent.

## Public Confidence in the Jurisdiction's Governance

Generally, there is no change in the public's confidence in a jurisdiction for the routine small spills. Public scrutiny of the role local government played in the handling of a large or dangerous spill will impact the way it is regarded in the future.

# Resource Directory

## Regional

- **Washington State Department of Ecology**  
<http://www.ecy.wa.gov/>
- **Pierce County Department of Emergency Management**  
<https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/2397/Local-Emergency-Planning-Committee>
- **Washington State Patrol, Office of the State Fire Marshal**  
<http://www.wsp.wa.gov/fire/firemars.htm>

## National

- **Department of Transportation Pipeline and hazardous Materials Safety Administration**  
<http://www.phmsa.dot.gov/public>
- **Emergency Planning for Chemical Spills**  
<http://www.chemicalspill.org/EPCRA-facilities/other.html>
- **Environmental Protection Agency**  
<http://www.epa.gov>
- **FEMA, Hazardous Materials Incidents**  
<http://www.fema.gov/business/guide/section3b.shtm>
- **U.S. Coast Guard National Response Center**  
<http://www.nrc.uscg.mil/nrchp.html>

## International

- **International Association of Fire Chiefs**  
<http://www.iafc.org/Operations/content.cfm?ItemNumber=1860>



## Endnotes

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<sup>1</sup> NW Area Committee. (February 2015). *Bakken crude oil pamphlet* Page 2. Retrieved on February 27, 2015 from <http://www.rrt10nwac.com/Files/FactSheets/150213064220.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, page 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Government of Madhya Pradesh. *Bhopal Gas Tragedy Relief and Rehabilitation Department*. Retrieved from <http://bgtrrdmp.mp.gov.in/facts.htm>

<sup>5</sup> NW Area Committee. (February 2015). *Bakken crude oil pamphlet*. Retrieved on February 27, 2015 from <http://www.rrt10nwac.com/Files/FactSheets/150213064220.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, page 7.

<sup>7</sup> *Thousands could have been exposed to deadly gas on Tacoma's Tideflats* Susan Gordan, Tacoma News Tribune, 03/09/08, updated 04/01/10, <http://www.thenewstribune.com/2008/03/09/304409/thousands-could-have-been-exposed.html>

<sup>8</sup> *Dalco Passage Spill*, U.S. Coast Guard and Washington Department of Ecology Timeline.

<sup>9</sup> *Polar Texas – Conoco Phillips Spill*, Washington Department of Ecology, <http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/spills/incidents/dalco/dalcobase.htm>

<sup>10</sup> Information presented by Dave Byers the Spills Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Program Manager with Washington State Department of Ecology on May 2, 2019. A copy of the presentation can be found at <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/6367/Risk-Assessment-Past-Events>

<sup>11</sup> NW Area Committee. (February 2015). *Bakken crude oil pamphlet*. Retrieved on February 27, 2015 from <http://www.rrt10nwac.com/Files/FactSheets/150213064220.pdf>

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, page 5 states that “Structural firefighters’ protective clothing will only provide limited protection.”

<sup>14</sup> *Exxon Valdez oil spill impacts lasting far longer than expected, scientists say*, David Williams, University of North Carolina News Services, <http://www.unc.edu/news/archives/dec03/peters121803.html>

<sup>15</sup> *Final Report on the Recovery of the Upper Sacramento River – Subsequent to the 1991 Cantara Spill*, The Cantara Trustee Council, 2007, p. 3.