

# PHMSA / OHMS HMEP Grant Conference *Strategic Level HM Trends & Issues*

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Sponsored by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)

# Objectives

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- Provide an overview of current and emerging trends and issues within the HazMat emergency preparedness community:
  - General observations, findings, and recommendations
  - Report on the HazMat Roundtable – Historical Review & Perspectives
  - Report on the Summit of Railroad HazMat Thought Leaders
- Facilitate break-out session to seek thoughts and input from HMEP Conference attendees



# Rules of Engagement (ROE)

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- Advocate – Facilitate – Collaborate
- Maintain a strategic perspective
- Be passionate, but treat each other with respect
- There's not always a right way or a wrong way
- Everything we do involves the management of risk
- Persuade your peers – “Keyboard Warriors”
- Seek agreement on foundational issues
- May “park” issues and keep moving forward



# “Trust the Process”

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- ***OBSERVATIONS*** – What are we seeing? Hearing? Doing?
  - What are we seeing “on the street” and outside of the “D.C. Bubble?”
  - What do we know? What do we think we know? What do we not know?
  - Do we or do we not understand the cause?
- ***FINDINGS*** – Facts/conclusions/consensus that are reached based upon experience, examination, and investigation
- ***RECOMMENDATIONS*** – Path or course of action forward



# Observations

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- Public expectations of the HazMat preparedness community are rising:
  - What was acceptable yesterday is often inadequate today.
  - You are only one incident away from having the current emergency paradigm shift.
- Decisions without data are nothing more than opinions. At some point, you must persuade your peers with facts.
- Metrics: Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.
- All information has a half life.



## Observations (continued)

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- Everybody comes to the dance with an agenda. Don't assume they all match.
- Responders can do everything right and still have a negative outcome. Likewise, one can do everything wrong and have a positive outcome. The problem gets a "vote."
- It's not the strategy or tactic, it's the critical analysis/decision-making process that leads you to the strategy or tactic.
- All of our conversations ultimately relate back to the level of risk we as a community are willing to assume:
  - When it comes to emergency preparedness, everything that we do involves some level of risk.




# Historical Reviews & Perspectives: 1990's/2019–2023

<https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/grants/hazmat/hazardous-materials-emergency-response-roundtable>

## Seven Key Improvement Areas

1. Planning & LEPC/TERC Performance
2. Prevention/Mitigation
3. Risk-based Response & Preparedness
4. Hazmat Training
5. Hazmat Standard of Care
6. Funding
7. Information Sharing





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### Hazardous Materials Grants Program Overview

[Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness \(HMEP\) Grant](#)

[Assistance for Local Emergency Response Training \(ALERT\)](#)

[Hazardous Materials Instructor Training \(HMIT\) Grant](#)

[Supplemental Public Sector Training \(SPST\) Grant](#)

[Community Safety \(CS\) Grant](#)

[Reports to Congress](#)

[Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Roundtable](#)

[Hazmat Incident Response Training Resources](#)

## Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Roundtable

### Overview

On May 9–10, 2023, the 2023 HazMat Roundtable was hosted by the National Fire Academy (NFA) in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Sponsored by the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the event was attended by HazMat technical specialists and practitioners from over 20 organizations including its host, sponsors, and other organizations. Organizations in attendance included the EPA, CHEMTREC, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), the National Association of SARA Title III Officers (NASTTPO), and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), to name a few.

The goal of the Roundtable was to discuss challenges in HazMat preparedness, offer recommendations and solutions to these challenges, and review the accomplishments and best practices that the Roundtable members and their organizations have been doing in the HazMat arena since the 2021–2022 Roundtable meetings.

The objectives of the Roundtable included:

- Prioritizing HazMat preparedness issues that have been previously identified and discussed at prior Roundtable sessions,
- Determining ways and processes to leverage the work that is currently being done, and
- Discussing new HazMat preparedness issues and challenges, as well as emerging trends and technologies that can be used to help address these challenges.

This report describes the Roundtable discussions, provides high-level summaries of the Roundtable member presentations and updates, and details the HazMat Roundtable's feedback, recommendations, and suggested plans of action.

### Reports

[2023 Hazmat Roundtable Report](#)

[2022 Hazmat Roundtable Report](#)

[2021 Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Roundtable Report](#)

[2019 Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Roundtable Report](#)

### Contact Us

Hazardous Materials Grants Program  
U.S. Department of Transportation, Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration  
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United States



# 2024 HazMat Roundtable Meeting

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- The meeting was held on May 21–22, 2024, at the National Emergency Training Center/U.S. Fire Administration with the following Federal agencies:
  - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
  - United States Fire Administration (USFA)
  - Department of Transportation (DOT)
  - Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
  - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
  - Department of Labor (DOL)/Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
- Attendees reviewed and concurred with findings from the 2023 Roundtable





# Historical Reviews & Perspectives: 2024

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Captured issues, recommendations, and solutions from previous meetings

Conducted an online survey to assign priority to the issues

Issues and priorities discussed at 2023 Roundtable:

- Improve LEPC/TERC performance
- Improve Risk-Based Preparedness & Response (RBR)
- Improve mitigation and prevention policies and metrics
- Enhance state and national training efforts for LEPC/TERC members
- Encourage updating regulations on standard of care
- Improve LEPC/TERC funding and access to grants
- Support timely and effective information sharing





## 2024 Roundtable Discussion Topics

- Critical Issues:
  - Information Sharing
  - HazMat Training & Funding
  - Funding & Prevention/Mitigation
- High-Level Issues:
  - Risk-Based Response & Preparedness
- Other issues may be important even if not listed as critical or high level.

## Information Sharing

- Both short-term and long-term processes for sharing critical information on emerging trends and issues among stakeholders are needed.
- Formal & informal processes are needed.

## Critical Issue



# Information Sharing Challenges

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- The world is changing and evolving, and new HazMat-related issues and challenges are arising every day.
- Information overload: People are continually bombarded with emails and social media posts, making critical information easily overlooked or ignored.
- Many HazMat-related organizations (e.g., volunteer fire depts) aren't aware of the training and related critical information available to them.
- Homeland security-related grant funding is often obtained through the Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (THIRA) process, while firefighter grant programs tend to focus on basic firefighting training and equipment, not hazardous materials threats or emerging issues.



## HazMat Training & Funding

- The process for applying for grants can be confusing and challenging, especially for volunteer organizations. The use of grant funding is often limited.

## Critical Issue



# HazMat Training & Funding Challenges

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- Grants.gov can be intimidating, and it is very difficult for nonprofits to navigate the grants process.
- States have different processes and available resources when applying for grants (e.g., some states use professional grant writers).
- Volunteer fire departments are organized differently across the nation (e.g., some fall under the county government or under the sheriff) and most are classified as nonprofit organizations, so they can't apply for Federal grants.
- It's difficult to identify who needs help and guidance at the local level.



## Funding & Prevention/Mitigation

- More HazMat emergencies could be avoided if local HazMat risks were better managed as part of the THIRA process and mitigation efforts were allowable.

## Critical Issue





# Funding & Prevention/Mitigation Challenges

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- It can be difficult to define mitigation for local governments (i.e., is mitigation applying for FEMA grants or is it spending money to mitigate each potential hazardous incident?).



## Risk-Based Response & Preparedness

- Information and guidance addressing emerging threats and risks are not released in a timely manner. Risk-Based Response decision-making does not include controlling impacts to critical infrastructure systems.

High Issue



# Risk-Based Response & Preparedness Challenges

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- We do not have the data to illustrate what the HazMat problem looks like in the United States.
- HazMat Tech staffing levels are decreasing due to retirement. Despite very robust incentives, recruiting people is still challenging.
- It's difficult to bring the right people together (e.g., regulators and responders as well as those who approach RBR from a community and commercial perspective versus the research and development perspective).





# Summary of 2024 Roundtable

*<https://www.phmsa.dot.gov/grants/hazmat/hazardous-materials-emergency-response-roundtable>*

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# Summit of Railroad HAZMAT Thought Leaders

Addison, Texas - March 26-28, 2024



U.S. Department  
of Transportation

Pipeline and  
Hazardous Materials  
Safety Administration





# OVERVIEW

- Foundation – “The White Paper”
- The Summit’s goal was to **gather insights** and **feedback** through a combination of panel and facilitated group discussions, with **a specific focus on HazMat rail related issues**.
- Attendees **discussed critical topics** facing rail-related HazMat issues, including **increasing safety** for emergency first responders through **training, preparedness, and outreach**.
- Participants helped **identify risk-based issues, gaps, and recommendations** to **improve the national capacity to respond to HAZMAT incidents involving rail**, with the goal of improving community safety and preparedness to rail HazMat incidents.





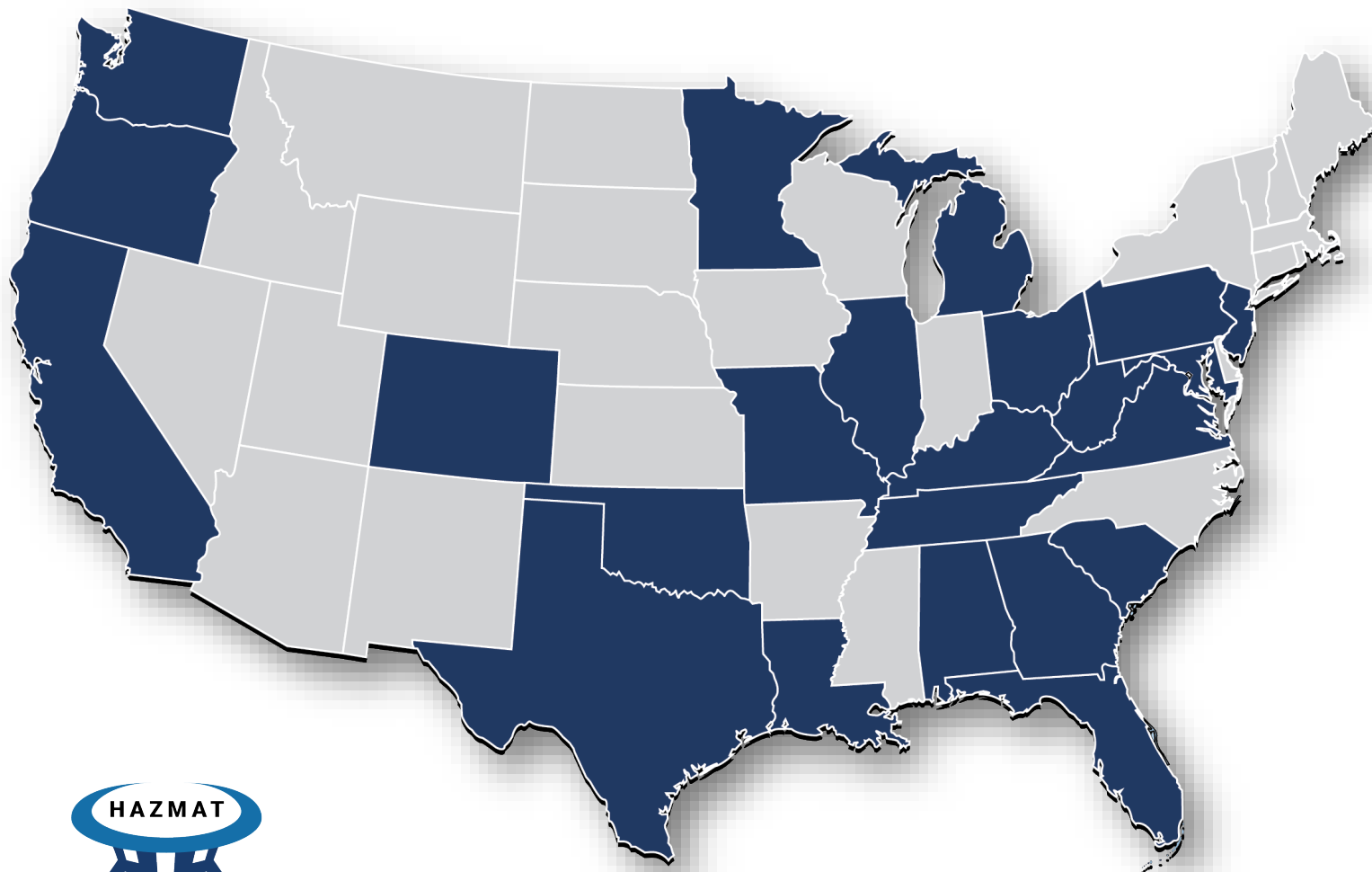
# SUMMIT EXPECTATIONS

- The Summit is NOT a regulatory or consensus standards activity.
- It is NOT an after-action review on the East Palestine incident.
- It is NOT a process to provide answers to all HM Rail training issues.
- Rather, the Summit is more akin to a net assessment where the emphasis is focused on the diagnosis of both the strengths and gaps/opportunities related to HM training.
- “Best in Class” organizations in our respective disciplines put as much emphasis on their bad days as their good days:
  - “Customer Service in the Fire Service”
  - “People will always remember how nice you were on that day.”





# OVERVIEW



Approximately **80 participants** from Federal, State, regional, local, and non-governmental personnel from **24 states and Canada**, and over **60 organizations**:

- Railroads
- First responders
- Training centers
- Academia
- Public officials
- Law enforcement
- Emergency managers
- City, county, state, and Federal response officials





# TOPIC AREAS OF DISCUSSION

## Training Consistency

- Consistency of Program Content and Qualification of Instructors
- Training Program Accreditation and Attestation
- Availability, Quality, and Consistency, of Third-Party Provided Training

## Training Types

- Essential Railroad Training for Emergency Responders and Formats Provided
- Geographical Reach of Railroad-Related HAZMAT Training
- Use of Safety Trains Operated by Railroads and Trade Associations

## Preparedness

- Full Scale and Tabletop HazMat Drills and Exercises
- Prepositioning HazMat Response Equipment or Incident Support Teams
- Railroad Community Awareness and Emergency Planning Guides/ Transportation Emergency Response Plans (TERPS)

## Community Outreach

- Advance Community Notification of HazMat Trains/Community HazMat Commodity Studies Provided by Railroads
- Community Assistance and Standard of Care Requirement
- Consideration of the Role of Community Emergency Coordinators and Planners





# FEEDBACK ON TOPIC AREAS

- Rail emergencies are one of a range of response problems that impact local governments, emergency management, and emergency responders.
- There remains challenges with training consistencies that impact training content and delivery.
- The challenge is the need/desire to incentivize participation in the training deliveries.
- Expand the audience focus for HazMat Rail training programs beyond technical training for fire departments.
- Provide more focused training on how railroads fit into the incident command structure and how railroads, contractors, responders, and leaders interact and communicate during HazMat Rail incident response.
- Increase awareness of expectations that rail HazMat teams have from emergency responders in the initial one to five hours before they respond.





# FEEDBACK ON TOPIC AREAS (cont.)

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## Communications and Coordination:

- Ongoing challenge with awareness of available training to potential students due to a lack of updated contact lists.
- General perception that it is difficult to receive commodity flow studies and preparedness data.
- Enhancements are needed to improve links between the rail industry and State and Local governments.
- Railroads provide both web-based and in-person opportunities for training, but there are challenges to integrating these into community planning efforts. These plans are often not well known by the community planners.
- Communities are not sure what resources the railroad will bring to an incident.





# KEY TAKE AWAYS

- The Summit provided a collaborative platform for sharing of training, preparedness, and outreach activities:
  - UP/IAFF/IAFC/NVFC shared information on what could be part of a Railway HAZMAT Specialist curriculum.
  - NVFC offered to share First 30 Minutes class information.
  - Shared vetting processed for third party vender instructors and content.
  - Stakeholders are taking ownership of responsibilities via the HazMat Roundtable to address trends and threats.
- Provided an open forum to share issues, challenges, and gaps to enhance awareness of the complexities across the multiple sectors:
  - Staying focused on Rail HazMat can be a challenge due to evolving and conflicting priorities.
- Inspired participants to share historical expertise and many left wanting to share information with someone they are mentoring.
  - Thought Leaders Next Generation





# SUMMIT QUOTES

*“Overall great experience and well worth my time. I'm leaving with ideas that I can utilize to close some of the gaps and challenges identified at the state and local level.”*

*“It was very valuable, and the connections made were fantastic. What a productive summit and again would love the opportunity to participate in future summits. The discussions were valuable and took much from them. Great Summit!”*

*“Great format, participations, and discussion. This should be an ongoing effort with checkpoint calls in between.”*

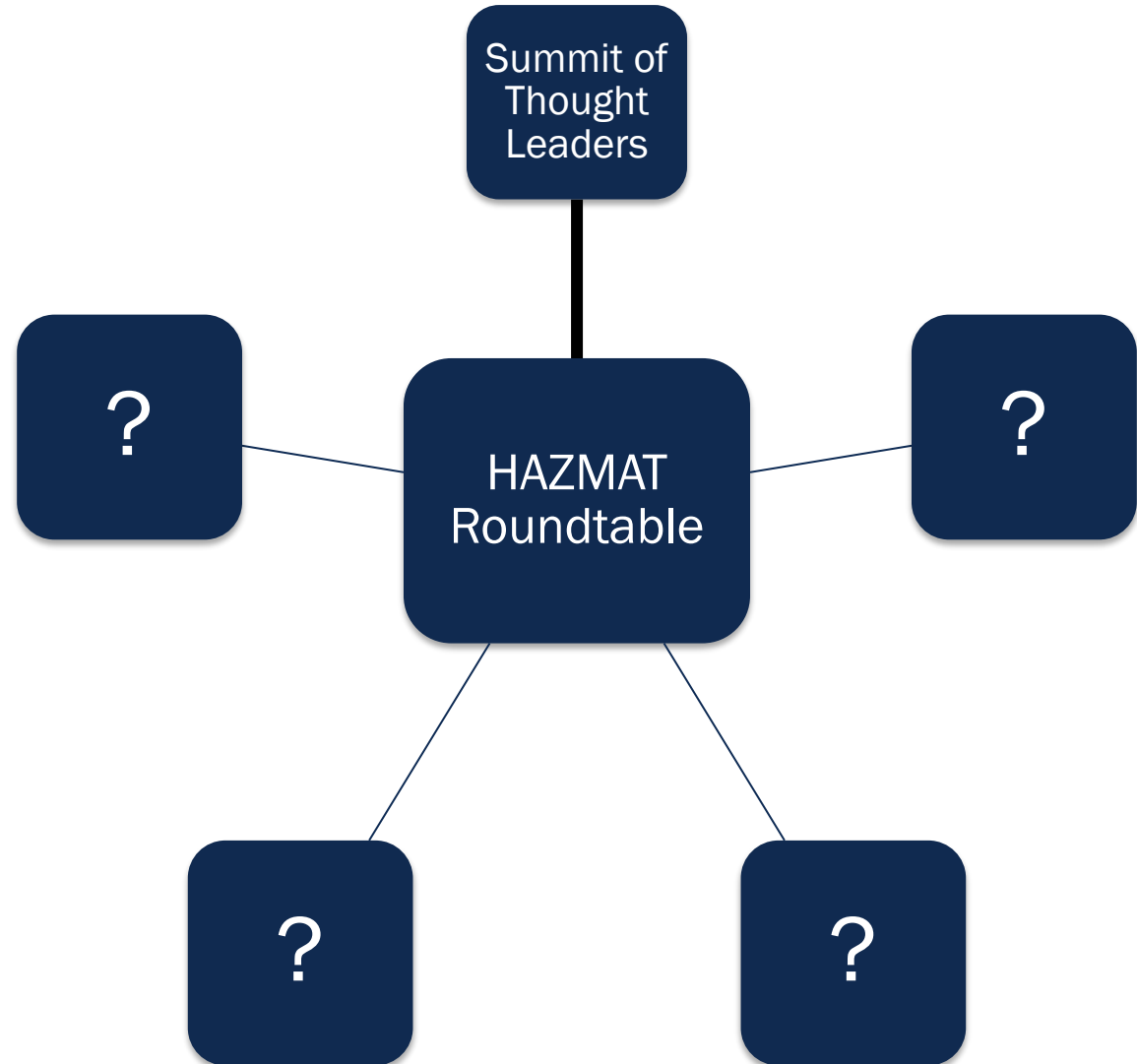
*“The right people were brought to the table and folks were open and honest about needs in this community.”*





# WHAT'S NEXT?

- Gathering any Summit Feedback
- Hub & Spoke Theory
- You tell us!







# PHMSA / OHMS HMEP Grant Conference *Strategic Level HM Issues*

Final Comments/Closing

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