A TRAINING PROGRAM ON HAZARDOUS MATERIALS FOR NON-SCIENTISTS

Aileen T. Compton

Smith Kline & French Laboratories
1500 Spring Garden Street
Philadelphia, PA 19101

ABSTRACT

It is imperative to educate and to train personnel at all levels in the organization on hazardous materials. Special concern is raised when the person to be trained has minimum education and experience in the basic physical and chemical sciences. These persons are indirectly involved in the use of chemicals through housekeeping, glassware cleaning, receiving and distribution, maintenance, building services, and intrasite transportation of hazardous materials.

The two obstacles to overcome in the training are the trainee's perception of hazard and risk, and the trainer's anxiety to implement company policy, as well as meet regulatory compliance.

Effective training and education can be accomplished by establishing the following objectives for the outcome of the training:

- To create a frame of reference for non-scientific persons to use in assessing hazard and risk
- To establish a baseline for the training group members with respect to their perception of hazard and risk
- To inform personnel on potential hazards, internal policies, procedures, programs, and available resources

Training time is one and a half to two hours. It requires active participation by the trainees. The training aides are household products that contain chemicals and texts on toxicology and hazardous materials.
The four basic components of the training session are:

- Structured participation by the class
- Discussion and preparation of a hazards sign and label
- Slides on policies, programs, and regulations
- Questions, answers, and open discussion on the work environment, home, or other topics of interest

This program is being used to make personnel aware of their work environment. It can also be expanded to meet public education needs for the recent Right-to-Know legislation.

KEY WORDS: Education/Training Hazardous Materials; Training Toxic Materials Hazards; Education Chemical Safety; Right-to-Know Public Education; Hazards Training Non-Scientist

INTRODUCTION

Hardly a day goes by that the layman doesn't pick up a newspaper and read an article on dioxin, formaldehyde, the dangers of Three Mile Island, or other incidents involving potentially hazardous materials. A special concern is raised when the person to be trained has minimal education and experience in the basic physical and chemical sciences. This is not to say that if one were educated, there would be a different viewpoint on potentially hazardous materials. Anyone who has worked with chemicals, radioactive materials, or other physical hazards is aware that a certain amount of panic exists, even among scientists, when there is overstimulation from sensationalism in the news media.

All of the above factors must be considered when a training program is designed.

IDENTIFICATION OF THE POPULATION AT RISK

In a facility where chemicals and hazardous materials are used, there is a group of support personnel who have the potential for exposure to these materials. The initial step prior to training is to identify the population at risk. This task can only be accomplished by making several tours through the facility to follow the flow of materials—all points of internal transportation, consumption (intended/unintentional spills), and disposal. Job descriptions give