

Module 7

Tank Farm and Bulk Storage Fire Incidents

Terminal Objective

Upon the successful completion of this module, participants will be able to develop plans to fight or contain fires at tank farms and bulk storage facilities.

Enabling Objectives

1. List the major concerns associated with fighting fires at tank farm and bulk storage facilities.
2. Describe the components of preplanning.
3. Develop methods to mitigate each of the concerns associated with fighting fires at tank farms and bulk storage facilities.

Introduction

Tank farm and bulk storage fire operations can be extremely dangerous and require an extremely advanced technical knowledge of flammable liquids fire fighting and fire protection. Because of the amount of time to set up operations and contain such a fire and the number of resources necessary to handle an incident and defend against a reflash or reignition, they can become very tedious operations. Departments that are responsible for these installations should establish extensive pre-fire plans and schedule drills and walk-throughs on a regular basis. It is imperative that the departments have good relations and cooperation with the facility operators and staff. In most cases it will require additional special equipment and apparatus for these facilities. In many cases a major fire incident at one of these facilities will be beyond the capabilities of the department. It may be prudent to contract outside services for these incidents depending on magnitude and location. The best single avenue of defense for these installations is prevention.

Tank Farm and Bulk Storage Fire Operations

The following are some considerations for fire incidents at major facilities:

- Pre-fire plans with predetermined flow rates should be established and reviewed regularly. Mutual aid and second-in companies should also be included in planning and drills.
- Storage tanks containing ethanol-blended fuels should be identified and known by the fire department personnel well in advance of any incident.
- If tanks are provided with pre-piped foam systems, connection locations and required pressures and flows should be identified. Personnel should be aware of the potential danger that systems installed on tanks that previously contained regular gasoline may not work or be appropriate for ethanol-blended fuels being stored in those tanks. Greater flow capacities may be required, and subsurface systems do not work with ethanol components.
- Fires in storage tanks where no fixed systems are available or usable or in cases where fixed systems are rendered inoperable may not be extinguishable with non-fixed appliances. Lowering the fuel

level and protecting exposures may be the only options for reducing the overall impact of the event.

Preplanning

Preplanning is a vital factor in the strategy of controlling an emergency situation. The amount of success obtained in resolving an emergency can, in most cases, be determined by the amount of advance preparation made by fire fighting personnel.

The purpose of pre-incident planning is to enable attack preparations and fire-fighting operations to be carried out at the scene of an emergency as efficiently and effectively as possible. The incident management attack operation can begin more quickly if details about the incident site are known prior to the arrival of the firefighters and if positions of equipment and possible hose layouts have been predetermined. When effective pre-incident plans have been made, less time needs to be spent on making decisions concerning the incident site during and after the size-up process.

Steps involved in the preplanning process include:

Information gathering: Collecting pertinent information at the selected site that might affect incident management operations, such as construction features, exposures, utility disconnects, fire hydrant location, water main sizes, and anything else that would affect response operations if an emergency should occur.

Information analysis: The information gathered must be analyzed in terms of what is pertinent and vital to incident suppression operations. An operable pre-incident plan must then be formulated and put into a usable format that can be used at the incident site.

Information distribution: All parties that will help to solve the problem should receive copies of the plan so that they become familiar with both the plan and pertinent factors relating to it.

Summary

In the event of a major incident at a fuel storage facility, you will be better positioned to respond if you have done your homework in advance. You should have an incident plan in place and be in the habit of maintaining good relationships with the agencies that can offer support in your time of crisis. Drills and walk-throughs are essential parts of planning for major incidents and should be conducted on a regular basis. A final note: Sometimes all you can safely do is contain

the incident and let the fire run its course. Knowing when to let this happen is an important component of safety.

Activity 7.1—Ethanol Emergency Procedures

Purpose

To allow participants to utilize all the information discussed in the course to determine the appropriate procedures for fire and non-fire ethanol emergencies.

Participant Directions

1. For this activity you will work in groups of two to three.
2. For your scenario you will determine appropriate containment, mitigation, and cleanup procedures including:
 - methods to identify the product;
 - what potential dangers need to be considered based on the chemical and physical properties of the E-85;
 - establishing a safety zone;
 - spill containment;
 - environmental issues;
 - fire suppression methods, techniques, and considerations; and
 - cleanup considerations.
3. Be prepared to share you findings with the class.

Scenario #1

A transport vehicle carrying 8,500 gallons of E-85 fuel to a retailer is involved in an accident at an intersection. A passenger car ran a red light hitting the trailer in the side rupturing one tank holding 3,200 gallons of E-85 fuel and causing the fuel to leak from the trailer. The fuel is running downhill into a creek which runs next to the street toward an entrance to a shopping center.

Scenario #2

A transport vehicle carrying 8,500 gallons of E-85 fuel to a retailer is involved in an accident at an intersection. A passenger car ran a red light hitting the trailer in the side rupturing one tank holding 3,200 gallons of E-85 fuel and causing the fuel to leak from the trailer. The fuel is running downhill into a dry ditch which runs next to the street toward an entrance to a shopping center. After approximately 12 minutes the spilled fuel on the ground near the tanker catches fire.