

Chemical Spill

Facilitator:

You are monitoring the radio as a day shift supervisor. You hear an officer dispatched to the scene of a motor vehicle crash involving a tractor-trailer. The crash is located on a major roadway that connects your community to a local interstate highway. Most of this roadway runs through the middle of an open, rural section of your community as it approaches the highway.

The dispatcher states the crash occurred on a well-known, sharp turn in the road just prior to the highway on and off-ramps. The reporting person states the truck is on its side, with half of the trailer portion still in the roadway and the remaining portion of the trailer and cab on the grass embankment between the roadway and the highway off-ramp. The reporting party was driving by on the interstate and has no additional information about injuries or other involved parties.

What actions, if any, do you take?

(Facilitator Note: If the FLSs make any references to informing the responding units about HAZMAT issues, the scenario update below should reflect that the arriving officer did not receive that information. It is possible the officer was not among the original officers dispatched and did not hear the FLS's subsequent warning, or the officer disregarded the warning.)

Scenario Update: The first officer arrives on scene. This officer confirms that the truck is on its side at the reported location on the roadway. The officer states he/she will be checking on the operator and requests additional units for traffic control. You believe the last broadcast from the officer was on a portable radio and that he/she is most likely out of their cruiser on foot. As the officer begins their next radio broadcast, you hear, "It looks like I have . . ." The officer's voice suddenly fades, and the radio goes silent.

Dispatch attempts to contact the officer on the radio several times, but receives no answer. Two additional responding units advise dispatch they are 2 minutes away from the crash scene and will check on the initial responding officer.

What is your response?

Scenario Update: Dispatch updates you and the responding units that multiple callers are reporting an officer lying on his back on the ground between a police car and the overturned truck. One witness is reporting an unknown liquid spilling from under the truck. They also report seeing another person laying on the sidewalk approximately 150 feet in front of the truck. This witness used their vehicle to stop traffic in one direction approximately 250 feet from the crash. The dispatcher calls you directly on the radio and states, "The witness is asking what they should do for the officer on ground?"

What is your response? What immediate and subsequent actions are required?

Issues: (Not in order – FLSs should prioritize and consider additional issues not listed)

1. Identify immediate safety risks. Properly implement protocols for a potential HAZMAT situation.
2. Prevent harm to the other responding officers/stopped motorists.
3. Officer rescue.
4. Truck driver/passenger rescue.
5. Check the person on the sidewalk.
6. Determine the dangers of the unknown liquid leaking from under the trailer. Is it the cargo or fuel from the cab?
 - a. Did either of these cause the officer/others to collapse?
 - b. How likely is it that the truck struck something else that is causing the danger? (Not very likely in this location.)
7. Prevent all vehicle and pedestrian traffic from entering the area.
8. Evacuation of the surrounding area.
9. Set up a command post.
10. Turn the situation over to Fire/EMS or a higher authority in HAZMAT.
11. Activate the Public Information Officer (PIO) to work with the news media and announce the Hazmat area to the community via media/social media.