

PRESS RELEASE

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COUNTY TO TEST EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN

For Immediate Release:

Cuyahoga County officials will get an idea of how well local emergency workers in the southwestern portion of the county respond to a hazardous materials emergency, when it stages its annual disaster training drill May 24, 2005, from 9a.m. to noon at GE Advanced Materials, Quartz 22557 West Lunn Road, Strongsville.

Cuyahoga County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) and the Cuyahoga County Division of Emergency Services is sponsoring the test, which will involve police and fire departments, emergency medical teams, and hospitals in the southwest suburbs, as well as GE Advanced Materials, Quartz' own industrial emergency team, reacting to a simulated release of hazardous materials.

"Having a Hazardous Materials Emergency Response Plan for Cuyahoga County is indeed important for the citizens of our community. By having a plan in place, Cuyahoga County will be better prepared to handle an emergency should one arise," said Captain Jeff Branich, Southwest Emergency Response Team leader (SERT- Strongsville Fire Department).

The local departments and first responders have worked together with LEPC and Cuyahoga County Emergency Services to develop plans and procedures in the event of a hazardous materials accident for more than a year as part of the County's overall planning for chemical emergency response. The training exercise will allow them to test how well various first responders react to, cooperate and manage the simulated disaster, and to test communications and equipment.

According to Mr. Alers "this type of exercise is one of the many training tools used by GE Advanced Materials to maintain its excellent safety record." Mr Alers said, "The full-scale exercise scenario the LEPC has planned is hypothetical and is not representative of any incident that might occur at our site".

The LEPC intentionally simulated a much larger incident than possible to ensure that all facets of the County's plan can be practiced and evaluated, and chose Strongsville for its important geographical location.

Captain Jeff Branich said "there is no way to anticipate how an accident involving hazardous materials will affect our citizens and surrounding environment, but an emergency response plan must be in place so damage can be contained. We hope we never have to use such a plan, but a full-scale exercise will assist the Fire and Police Departments to understand the magnitude of what might occur. We commend GE Advanced Materials, Quartz for their commitment to safety and thank them for their cooperation. A plan must be prepared and ready, so a response to such an emergency is immediate and decisive."

He noted that not only do businesses in the Southwestern portion of the County use and store hazardous materials on site, he said, but yearly, countless numbers of hazardous materials travel through the area on highways, streets and by rail.

Local business traffic along Lunn Road, south of Route 82 will be maintained during the simulation, however through traffic will be re-routed. The Ohio Emergency Management Agency in cooperation with the Ohio State Emergency Response Commission and regional emergency responders will monitor the procedures of countywide emergency response organizations to evaluate performance and effectiveness.

The annual exercise is conducted at one of the local facilities that are included in the LEPC Plan under Ohio emergency planning laws as well as Title III of the federal Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act.

Other participants in the exercise include the Southwest General Health Center, Parma Community General Hospital, Southwest Council of Governments (Newburgh Heights, Cuyahoga Heights, Valley View, Independence, Seven Hills, Brooklyn Heights, Broadview Heights, Brecksville, Lyndale, Brooklyn, Parma, Parma Heights, North Royalton, Middleburg Heights, Brook Park, Berea, Olmsted Falls, Olmsted Township), the Northeast Ohio Regional Sewer District, the American Red Cross, the Salvation Army, the Medina Emergency Management Agency, Lorain Emergency Management Agency, the Ohio Emergency Management Agency, and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency.

NOTE TO THE EDITOR: The GE Advanced Materials, Quartz facility is the headquarters for their Quartz business, with approximately 260 employees. GE's primary products are Ceramic Powders and Shapes for the Telecommunication and Aerospace business.