

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS (HAZMAT) TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

The Milwaukee Fire Department Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) Team maintained a high level of operational readiness and regional coordination throughout 2025. The team responded to complex hazardous materials incidents, supported law enforcement and regional partners, and participated in advanced training and preparedness initiatives to ensure the safety of Milwaukee residents, businesses, and first responders. As a recognized Tier 1 hazardous materials asset, the team also contributed to the safety and wellbeing of communities across Wisconsin through training, coordination, and response support.

During the year, the HAZMAT Team managed several significant hazardous materials incidents, including a major mercury spill response, a hydrogen fluoride (HF) incident at the Materion facility, and the mitigation of a leaking oxygen cylinder at the VA Medical Center ensuring the safety of patients and staff within a sensitive healthcare environment.

Transportation-related incidents remained a consistent operational demand for our team. While most of the transportation runs were petroleum spills, the team also responded to highway incidents involving overturned or compromised commercial vehicles requiring rapid hazard assessment, product identification, monitoring, and coordination with law enforcement and transportation agencies to protect the public and the environment.

Throughout 2025 the HAZMAT Team remained a key technical support to local, state and federal law enforcement agencies during unknown substance identification responses. The team offered specialized monitoring and analytical capabilities along with evidence collection for our law enforcement partners.

Interagency coordination remained a key component of the team's mission. In 2025, HAZMAT personnel participated in Project Cobalt Blue Thunder, a multi-agency radiation tabletop exercise hosted by the Medical College of Wisconsin and conducted with the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), and the Department of Energy (DOE). The exercise strengthened preparedness and coordination for potential radiological emergencies.

The team assisted neighboring fire departments with radiation response training in partnership with the Wisconsin State Health Department Radiation Protection Program during the Welcome Center Training event, further strengthening regional response capabilities.

In 2025, the HAZMAT team supported major public events during the Milwaukee Brewers playoff run. The team established Joint Hazard Assessment Teams (JHATs) to provide monitoring and rapid response capability to quickly and discreetly mitigate incidents during the games.

Professional development remained a priority in 2025. HAZMAT Technicians not only attended Highway Emergency Response Specialist training at SETRC in Pueblo, Colorado, team members also participated in Above the Line/Below the Line Training with the 54th Civil Support Team, enhancing coordination with military Weapons of Mass Destruction response assets.

HAZMAT showcased their significant role in both pre-event preparedness and event monitoring with readiness-to-respond county-wide and at voting locations on election day. This was the second election in which the HAZMAT team was called on to closely monitor the polling locations.

Through operational response, specialized training, and strong partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies, the Milwaukee Fire Department HAZMAT Team continues to maintain a high level of readiness while protecting the community from hazardous materials threats.