



National Toxic Substance Incidents Program

TRANSPORTATION VERSUS FIXED FACILITY INCIDENTS



The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) developed an in depth criterion to determine if a toxic substance release is eligible for inclusion in the National Toxic Substance Incidents Program (NTSIP) database. Incidents included in NTSIP surveillance are categorized as either transportation incidents or fixed facility incidents. ATSDR's criterion for distinguishing between the two is detailed and may be different from how other organizations define these incidents. When interpreting NTSIP data, it is important to understand how different circumstances affect whether an incident is coded as transportation or fixed facility.

As established by ATSDR for NTSIP, transportation events include events involving hazardous materials being transported by ground transportation (e.g., trucks, vans, and automobiles), railroad, aircraft, boats, ships, and pipelines outside the boundaries of a fixed facility. In certain circumstances, transportation events may occur on fixed-facility property, if the event occurs on a vehicle that brought a substance to the facility or will carry it away from the facility, it is coded in the NTSIP database as a transportation event. For example, it is a transportation event if (1) a spill occurs along the route of a moving vehicle such as a truck or a train, but is not discovered until the vehicle reaches a destination or (2) a release is discovered in a truck that is stopped at a gas station or other location. If a substance was obviously spilled from a moving vehicle (e.g., the substance covered a large distance on the side of the road or barrels were lying in the road), it is coded as transportation.

If an event is not clearly transportation, then it is coded as a fixed facility. Two examples of events that are fixed facility, but might not seem to be, are: (1) containers of chemicals found dumped in a field or hazardous substances found spilled on the ground, and (2) events involving vehicles that are part of the operation of the fixed-facility and occur within a fixed-facility are coded as fixed facility events (e.g., farm tractors, forklifts, and railroads within the facility that are used to move items within its boundaries).

During loading and unloading of a vehicle that is carrying substances to or from a fixed facility (e.g., a cargo ship docked at port; a train at a depot, loading station, or rail yard; a truck at a loading dock; an airplane at an airport, etc.), an event is:

- Transportation if the release occurs before all of the material has been unloaded from the vehicle
- Fixed facility if the release occurs before all of the material has been totally loaded onto the vehicle
- Fixed facility if the hazardous material was totally unloaded on a loading dock, conveyor belt, forklift, or other location that is part of the fixed facility before the spill occurred

The same guidelines apply to a small freight carrier, such as UPS or Federal Express. If leakage occurs while the package is on the vehicle, regardless of whether the vehicle is moving or stopped, it is coded as transportation. If leakage occurs while the package is off a vehicle that is transporting it to or from the fixed facility whether it is on a loading dock, conveyor belt, forklift, or in temporary storage, the event is coded as fixed facility.

If a release occurs when transferring chemicals from one railcar to another railcar and the railcars are used in a storage capacity, the event is coded as fixed facility. If the railcars are not being used in a storage capacity, then the event is coded similarly as the loading/unloading of a vehicle as described above.

If a release occurs when unloading chemicals from a dock to a stationary barge, it is coded as a fixed facility event.

If a release occurs when unloading chemicals from a stationary barge to a dock, it is coded as a fixed facility.

While a crop duster may be functioning as a part of the farm machinery when it is spraying the crops, it is considered a transportation incident because it carried pesticides to the farm and has not totally unloaded its product until it is done. In order to keep surveillance consistent, all crop dusters in the air (not parked) will always be considered transportation.

Spills from pipelines that commence and terminate within the same fixed facility are coded as fixed-facility events.