



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety**

Major hazard facility – guide

Providing information to the community

May 2020

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Guides

A guide is an explanatory document that provides more information on the requirements of legislation, details good practice and may explain means of compliance with standards prescribed in the legislation. The government, unions or employer groups may issue guidance material.

Compliance with guides is not mandatory. However, guides could have legal standing if it were demonstrated that the guide is the industry norm.

This Guide has an operations focus and is set out in the context of risk assessment and legislative requirements of all responsible persons. Consequently, each operation needs to understand its limitations and skills base.

The Guide is based on current experience and is not claimed to be complete.

Who should use this Guide?

You should use this Guide if you are responsible for developing and monitoring procedures for communications and the provision of information to the community, local governments for the district in which the community resides and emergency services which may be impacted by activities or major incidents of a major hazard facility.

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1 Introduction

This document has been developed to provide assistance and guidance to operators of major hazard facilities (MHF) to meet the Western Australian Dangerous Goods Safety (Major Hazard Facility) legislation administered by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (the Department).

The legislation covered by this Guide is listed in Appendix 1.

1.1 Scope and objective of this Guide

The purpose of this Guide is to help MHF operators comply with their obligations to provide the local community with information about their facility and the actions to take in the event of a major incident.

This document will assist MHF operators to:

- identify the extent of the area surrounding the facility for which they must provide the community and local authority with information
- determine what information to provide to the local community and local authority
- determine who in particular to provide the information to.

This Guide is intended to provide clarity to both industry and Department personnel on areas of the legislation which may be ambiguous or open to interpretation.

The following appendices are included:

Appendix 1 Legislative provisions

Appendix 2 References and acknowledgements

Appendix 3 Glossary of terms

Appendix 4 Further information

1.2 Definitions and abbreviations

Definitions and abbreviations are included in Appendix 3 Glossary of terms.

2 Benefits of providing information to the community

An informed community is in a better position to protect itself in the event of a major incident with off-site impact, thereby reducing the actual consequences of the major incident.

Other benefits in sharing information with the community, the local authority and emergency services for the district in which the MHF is located include providing:

- an opportunity to circulate correct information, or dispel misinformation, about the MHF and its operations
- assurances that stakeholder interests have been, and are being, taken into account
- raised awareness of actions to be taken if there is a major incident
- assurances that after a major incident that measures are being taken to prevent reoccurrence
- improved relations and increased trust.

Information sharing with the local authority will also assist in strategic and emergency planning. Ideally, consultation and information sharing between the facility and the local authority should be an ongoing process that starts at the planning stage (for new facilities or modifications to existing facilities) and continues through the life cycle of the facility.

3 Providing information to the community

Operators of MHF sites should have in place a documented procedure and process for the provision of information to the local community. Information provided should be managed under the operator's document control and records management procedures.

Any information that is provided to the community should be set out and expressed in a way that is easily understood by persons who are not familiar with the facility and its operations and should be:

- presented in a user-friendly way
- in plain language, avoiding technical terms
- available in appropriate community languages
- reviewed, and as necessary, revised if a modification is made to the MHF.

The local community comprises of the people whose safety could be affected by a major incident. Consideration needs to be given to the consequence zones for credible toxic releases, thermal radiation and blast pressures. This could include:

- local residents
- sensitive and vulnerable developments such as childcare facilities, schools, hospitals, aged-care facilities, detention and correctional centres
- operators of community centres, shopping centres, retail outlets and sporting venues
- operators of caravan parks, hotels, motels and hostels
- operators of docks, mooring facilities and marinas etc.

The local area authority (such as a local council) and the emergency services (police, Department of Fire and Emergency Services [DFES] and Department of Health) should also be given the general information.

3.1 General information for the local community

The operator should make general information available to the local community and the local authority for the area in which the MHF is situated.

Development of this general information together with emergency response requirements should be completed using the information contained within the site emergency response guide. This should be developed in consultation with DFES as well as key stakeholders in the local community.

The communication of this information may be conducted by the distribution of leaflets delivered via letterbox drops, websites or planned media campaigns and should include:

- the name and location of the MHF
- the name, position and contact details of a person from whom information about the facility may be obtained – ideally this should be the person to whom community concerns may be directed and should also include a 24 hour emergency contact number
- a general description of the MHF's operations
- examples of the possible nature of a major incident, along with information concerning the potential effects on the population, both immediate and delayed
- the means by which the local community will be notified of a major incident occurring including:
 - how they will be informed e.g. initial off-site warning systems
 - the role of the emergency services (such as DFES)
 - the arrangement for the testing of warning systems
 - how to recognise the early signs of a major incident in case a timely warning is not given
 - how they will know the major incident is over

- details of any communication system in place to ensure that the community is provided with information during the course of an incident – this may include details of television channels or radio station frequencies where information concerning the incident will be broadcast
- actions that members of the local community should take if a major incident occurs as specified in the emergency plan for the MHF.

3.2 Emergency communication

The operator should have in place a means of warning people who may be affected by a major incident or dangerous occurrence as soon as practicable.

This warning mechanism should be developed and documented as part of the facility safety report and safety management system, and the emergency response plan developed in consultation with DFES.

A facility's warning siren is not always sufficient to keep the community informed of a major incident or dangerous occurrence and the responding emergency services may decide to issue widespread public warnings via the media as well as personal notification by telephone or door-to-door visits.

3.3 Information relating to major incidents

As soon as practicable after a major incident has occurred, the operator of the MHF should take all reasonable steps to provide the local community, emergency services, the local authority and any relevant government department with information about the major incident. This should include:

- a general description of the major incident, e.g. fire, explosion, leak of hazardous substance, etc, details of the hazardous chemicals involved and the likely consequences and impacts to the local community
- a description of the actions the operator has taken and proposes to take to prevent any recurrence of the major incident or the occurrence of a similar major incident
- the recommended actions that the local authority and members of the local community should take to eliminate or minimise risks arising from the major incident or dangerous occurrence.

Appendix 1 Legislative provisions

Dangerous Goods Safety (Major Hazard Facilities) Regulations 2007

- r. 24 Safety management system, operator of major hazard facility to prepare
- Sch 4 cl. 4(3) Safety information to ensure employees are given procedures to inform community, local government and emergency services about the use of dangerous goods, the risk assessment and actions to take if a dangerous situation or major accident occurs at MHF.

Dangerous Goods Safety (Storage and Handling of Non-explosives) Regulations 2007

- r. 76A Information for occupier of site adjacent to dangerous goods site
- r. 118 Dangerous goods incidents, response required to
- r. 119 Affected persons to be advised of dangerous goods incident

Appendix 2 References and acknowledgements

Development of this Guide has referenced:

- NSW Planning HIPAP 2 *Fire safety*
- NSW Planning HIPAP 4 *Risk criteria for land use safety planning*
- Safe Work Australia, *Guide for major hazard facilities – Providing information to the community*

Appendix 3 Glossary of terms

Community. In relation to a major hazard facility, means all people living or working outside the facility who would be likely to suffer personal injury or property damage if a major incident occurred at the facility.

Emergency services. Means the police force and the fire and emergency services covering the region.

DFES. Department of Fire and Emergency Services.

Major incident. An incident involving or affecting a Schedule 1 substance that causes serious harm to people, property or the environment.

MHF. Major hazard facility.

Appendix 4 Further information

Other guides available:

- *ALARP demonstration*
- *Audits, review and continual improvement*
- *Bridging documents and simultaneous operations (SIMOPS)*
- *Dangerous Goods Safety (Storage and Handling of Non-explosives) Regulations 2007 – guide*
- *Emergency planning*
- *Hazard identification*
- *Involvement of members of the workforce*
- *Major accident events, control measures and performance standards*
- *Management of change*
- *Records management, including document control*
- *Reporting dangerous goods incidents – guideline (6th edition)*
- *Risk assessment and management including operational risk assessment*