Effective training on environmental, transportation, and safety issues is critical to protect employees and defend your organization from costly fines and liability. But not all hazardous materials training or hazardous waste training sessions are created equal. Training to handle, manage, and ship dangerous chemicals is not a rote exercise intended to “check a box.” When a mistake can lead to serious injury, death, evacuations, hospitalizations, highway closures, and lasting environmental contamination—training for personnel must meet higher standards for quality, accuracy, and knowledge retention.
1. Employees doze off during training

This first one may sound funny—but the fact is that boring training is dangerous.

Professionals who work with and around hazardous chemicals and wastes need training that holds their attention and keeps them engaged.

This isn’t training to use a spreadsheet program or training to make sales calls we’re talking about—this is training to protect workers from the often-lethal hazards they face in your workplace.

2. The resources are out of date

What good is RCRA training that leaves out major updates in EPA’s 2016 Generator Improvements Rule? What about OSHA Hazard Communication training that doesn’t mention GHS or IATA dangerous goods training cribbed from a ten-year-old DGR?

Training like this is not only ineffective, it can confuse and hold back employees who encounter real-world requirements left out of their training.

While the basics of safety training may be there, if your training provider doesn’t keep training materials updated, you could be missing out on critical new or updated requirements that will cost you when inspection time rolls around. Environmental, transportation, and safety regulations change constantly; your training should too.
3. The focus is too narrow

The worlds of 49 CFR hazardous materials and RCRA hazardous waste compliance overlap frequently and in big ways. A training provider who knows hazardous waste but not hazmat, or vice versa, may only be giving you half the story.

Find a trainer who does both. That way, you have a one-stop-shop for compliance answers that address the relationship between these two intertwined programs when necessary. Plus, you may be able to find a trainer who can answer other questions you have—about EPCRA, CERCLA, TSCA, or other programs.

Training that’s too specialized may fail to recognize the difficulties you face in complying with multiple environmental and chemical programs at once.

4. Workers don’t retain the knowledge shared during training

The best environmental and safety compliance trainers have both expertise in the subject matter and the ability to help others learn. You could book the world’s foremost hazardous materials expert as your trainer, but this doesn’t mean you will get the best training possible.

Remember, it’s not how much your trainer knows—it’s how much he or she can impart to you and your team. After the training, the trainer goes home. Your employees are the ones who must use what they learn to ensure compliance on a day-to-day basis.
5. They don’t provide any follow-up service

Learning how to navigate and apply environmental, safety, and transportation regulations is challenge enough, and real-world compliance is never quite as straightforward as it is in the classroom. There will be a time when you need backup to make a critical decision, answer an inspector’s request, or win an argument with your boss.

The best trainers provide professionals with ample resources and options for finding answers after the training. If your training doesn’t do this—or if your trainer treats you like a stranger once your training is complete—consider finding a provider with a reputation for expert training and follow-up compliance services.
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