

Regional HazMat Teams: Local Assets, Statewide Support

A hazardous materials incident can quickly exceed the training, staffing, or equipment available in one jurisdiction. Montana's six Regional Hazardous Materials Teams are local fire-service resources based in **Billings, Bozeman, Great Falls, Helena, Kalispell, and Missoula** that may be mobilized to support jurisdictions across the state. They supplement—not replace—the local response agency, Local Emergency Response Authority (LERA), or local hazardous materials plan.

What Is a Regional Team?

A Regional HazMat Team is an organized group of trained responders prepared to work near a hazardous material release, help control or stabilize the incident, and provide technical assistance to local jurisdictions. Host jurisdictions certify personnel training and equipment readiness under the State of Montana Hazardous Material Plan; the State Emergency Response Commission approves teams, and Montana Disaster and Emergency Services (MT DES) coordinates state-authorized deployments.

Who Remains in Charge?

The jurisdiction that requests a HazMat team remains in charge through its Incident Commander and Incident Command System. The Regional Team maintains administrative control of its personnel and equipment while operating in support of the local Local Emergency Response Authority (LERA) or Incident Commander—it does not “take over” the incident.

Regional assistance is also not automatic. The team determines whether it can support the request at that time, and MT DES coordinates and approves deployment under the State HazMat Plan.

Regional HazMat Teams

What Can Teams Provide?

Depending on the incident, team availability, and identified need, assistance may include:

- Phone-based technical advice, chemical research, and hazard or risk assessment.
- Detection, monitoring, classification, and identification of known or unknown materials using field instruments.
- Specialized chemical protective clothing, respiratory protection, and entry operations.
- Advanced control, containment, or confinement within the limits of available personnel, equipment, and personal protective equipment.
- Decontamination support, spill or leak-control equipment, communications, and other specialized response resources.

The exact staffing and resources sent are matched to the incident; a request does not automatically produce a full-team response.

Planning Takeaway

Local Emergency Plan Committees (LEPCs) should identify Regional HazMat Teams as special response resources in local plans, but they should also maintain local notification, initial-response, mutual-aid, decontamination, medical-support, and resource-request procedures.

Does your local Hazardous Materials Plan explain when and how to request Regional HazMat Team support?

For more information, contact your MT DES District Field Officer or visit des.mt.gov.



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Primary references: State of Montana Hazardous Material Plan (May 2025); Montana Regional Hazardous Materials Incident Response Teams brochure.