

# A Chempack Cross-border Agreement and Exercise: Can Chempack materials be delivered across a state border?

**Introduction:** Chempacks are caches of nerve agent antidotes used to treat individuals exposed to nerve agents (e.g., Sarin and organophosphate pesticides). They are in relatively few communities, and should be shared during emergencies.

In July 2007, Chempack Coordinators and State Attorneys from California, Nevada, and Oregon met and drafted an interstate agreement to share Chempack materials. The three states signed the agreement in April 2008.

Oregon and California supported a local cross-border full-scale exercise in January 2009 to test the procedures in the agreement.

**Methods:** The agreement contains procedures to request, deliver, use, control, and store the Chempack assets. The agreement details legal areas, such as reimbursement and liability. It also calls for annual exercises or drills.

The Del Norte County (CA) Emergencies Services Coordinator led the exercise design, which was planned as a multi-disciplinary, multi-county, multi-state exercise. Thirty-six agencies and 250 players participated in the exercise.

The exercise scenario consisted of a small airplane whose pilot and passenger were delivering Sarin to Los Angeles from a source in Canada. The aged aircraft had engine trouble and needed to land at Jack McNamara Field, Crescent City, California.

The engine quit and they attempted to lighten the load in order to glide into the airfield. They jettisoned four 1-gallon containers, which broke apart upon impact on the Point St. George dunes, a popular recreation area between the ocean and nearby airport. The stalled plane crashed, bursting into flames.

Witnesses who saw the crash called 911. Other beachcombers saw the packages fall and went to investigate. One person who picked up a piece of torn milk carton fell over unconscious. Within minutes, many other bystanders began to feel the symptoms of nerve agent poisoning.

The exercise objectives included requesting and receiving resources from Curry County (OR), and activating the Chempack Response Plans for Del Norte and Curry Counties.

**Results:** The exercise successfully tested the agreement, procedures, and plans. The Chempack materials arrived at Point St. George from Brookings, Oregon, 30 miles away in less than 1 hour from request, meeting the objective.

**Discussion:** Many small communities are near the border of each state. The sparse population, long distances, difficult terrain, and lack of highways make coordination, logistics, and communication difficult. This agreement supports the communities' work across borders for planning, exercises, and response. The exercise ensured that the communities will have more effective responses and better outcomes in the future.

**Conclusion:** A cross-border Chempack agreement was an effort among public health, legal advisors, and local partners. This agreement is state-to-state, but incorporates local emergency management cooperation. The exercise brought together dozens of community agencies and hundreds of players, and they have strengthened their capability to respond to a serious chemical event.

This Chempack Agreement has been lauded as a model of cooperation nationally, by CDC. It is being used as a model for cross-border asset sharing, such as between Washington and Oregon for SNS assets. Other states and governments could find value in its promise.

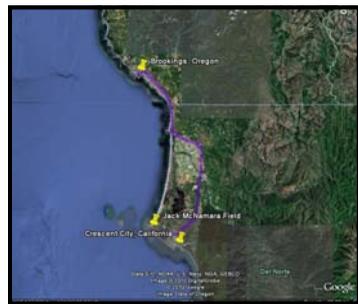
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1) Map of Oregon/California border; 30 miles between Brookings, OR and Jack McNamara Field, CA



3) First Responder vehicles at Point St. George, CA, the exercise site where victims of sarin were found.



5) A Chempack container arrived on the scene, and has antidotes to treat victims in the field.



7) Victims have been decontaminated and dressed in jumpers. Decon tent is to the left.



9) First Responders who have been decontaminated are about to exit the Warm Zone and check with their supervisor.



11) The hospital set up a decontamination tent; they are about to decon the victims who came to the hospital.



2) Players arrive for pre-exercise orientation.



4) First Responders in Level A suits check a nerve agent victim during the exercise.



6) Point St. George decontamination area is set up.



8) Carrying a victim from the Hot Zone.



10) Victims who left the scene on their own are in the hospital ambulance bay; the act contaminated the bay.



12) The Chempack arrives at the hospital to treat the victims there.