



Worker Training Program: Texas

A National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) Superfund-Related Activity

The NIEHS Worker Training Program (WTP) annually funds training for more than 9,200 workers through nearly 530 health and safety courses in Texas. These grantee-led trainings are preparing workers to handle hazardous materials and respond to disasters in their communities.



Courses include:

- Asbestos Awareness
- Bloodborne Pathogens
- Confined Space Rescue
- Emergency Preparedness
- Hazard Communication
- Hazardous Waste Operations
- Industrial Spill Response
- Infectious Disease Operations
- National Incident Command System
- Personal Protective Equipment Awareness
- Respiratory Protection

Training Highlights

Hazardous Waste Cleanup Training Across Sectors

The Texas-Utah Consortium for Hazardous Waste Worker Education and Training trains workers on topics such as the handling and cleanup of hazardous materials, emergency response, radiological protection, and bloodborne pathogens. In Texas, more than 2,000 workers benefit annually from the training delivered through the consortium, funded out of The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston (UTHealth). These trainings extend across sectors, but focus on health care, petrochemical, and higher education. For example, the consortium provides annual training, often regarding infectious diseases, to physicians and nurses employed by Exxon Mobil around the world.

Additionally, union workers at the Valero McKee Refinery in Sunray, Texas, near the Texas-Oklahoma border receive hazardous materials and response training through the United Steelworkers Tony Mazzocchi Center (USW TMC) for Health, Safety, and Environmental Education. The USW TMC's Triangle of Prevention (TOP) program, a labor-management cooperative health and safety program, delivers union-led health and safety training to workers and their managers across the refinery. TOP tailors the program to the site's refinery operations to share lessons learned and develop systematic improvements in the production, disposal, and transportation of hazardous substances and wastes.

Job Training and Economic Impact

The Environmental Career Worker Training Program offers job training for disadvantaged and underrepresented workers. OAI, Inc. implements this training for residents of Dallas in collaboration with CitySquare and the Construction Education Foundation. These organizations increase employment and placement opportunities in the fields of environmental restoration, hazardous materials handling, welding, electrical work, and construction.



Photo courtesy of Ron Snyder

About the Worker Training Program

WTP funds nonprofit organizations to provide health and safety training for workers who may be exposed to hazardous materials and waste at work or while assisting with emergency response. WTP was initiated under the Hazardous Substance Basic Research and Training Program authorized by the Superfund Amendments and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (42 USC 9660a).

Under these NIEHS Superfund-related activities, WTP grantees provide trainings across the country through the [Hazardous Waste, Hazmat Disaster, and Environmental Career Worker Training Programs](#).

For more information, visit
www.niehs.nih.gov/wtp.



Recently, on average, 85% of people who completed the training in Dallas were placed into full-time employment upon graduation. The program is also implemented in Houston through Texas Southern University, certifying community members in asbestos abatement, hazardous waste operations and emergency response, lead abatement, and weatherization.

The Environmental Career Worker Training Program has a nationwide [economic impact](#) through delivery of pre-employment and health and safety training in underserved communities.

Disaster Response and Recovery Training

Multiple NIEHS grantees have supported and led critical training initiatives for natural disaster preparedness, response, and recovery. Within the first two weeks after Hurricane Harvey hit in 2017, grantees began providing disaster cleanup and response training. The International Chemical Workers Union Council delivered a three-day bilingual Disaster Train-the-Trainer course in Houston, in collaboration with local worker center Fe y Justicia. The program targeted day laborers, faith groups, volunteer groups, and residents, with more than 20 people attending. USWTMC's bilingual Specialized Emergency Response Trainers also partnered with Fe y Justicia to deliver Train-the-Trainer courses on mold awareness.



Several grantees provided trainers who delivered on-the-job training for day laborers and recovery volunteers, such as from AmeriCorps. These short training sessions discussed critical skills on respirator use and practices to protect against hazards found during mucking and gutting, a process in which wet and potentially biologically or chemically contaminated materials are removed from homes and buildings.

Nuclear Worker Training

Coursework at the Amarillo College's Safety and Environmental Technology program prepares workers for jobs at the Consolidated Nuclear Security's Pantex Plant, a U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) nuclear weapons assembly and disassembly facility. Amarillo College trains more than 1,000 workers annually for Pantex. This program is funded through the Community College Consortium for Health and Safety Training/National Partnership for Environmental Technology Education under the [NIEHS/DOE Nuclear Worker Training Program](#).

Amarillo College is a comprehensive, two-year public community college that provides a wide assortment of courses for the DOE site, such as basic superfund site worker, site worker refresher, hazardous materials transportation, and asbestos abatement.



Photo courtesy of Pantex

Biosafety, Biosecurity, and Infectious Disease Response Training

WTP provided training under the [Ebola Biosafety and Infectious Disease Response Training Program](#), a national effort to deliver infection control practices and hazard recognition training to workers in health care and non-health care settings. Across the three years of the program, grantees taught 30 courses to more than 750 workers throughout Texas. The courses were provided by UTHealth, funded through the Indiana University Bloomington Biosafety and Infectious Disease Training Initiative. UTHealth has also provided training on health and safety for COVID-19.

To develop this three-year program, NIEHS received \$10 million from emergency Ebola treatment and prevention funds provided by Congress to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.