Intermodal Transportation and Links to Hazardous Mishaps

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As we drive to and from work, whether it be dropping the kids off at school or simply going grocery shopping the hazardous materials traveling through our everyday streets are not something the average person thinks about. Every day millions of tons of hazardous cargo are being transported without us ever knowing what dangers might be traveling next to us.

Throughout my research on this very topic the numbers are alarming. According to the Bureau of Transportation Statistics a total of 19,774 total incidents occurred in 2018. While that number may be higher that one might expect, the number of fatalities due to hazardous mishaps were 4. There is some concern there. What can companies do to minimize the number of incidents? While 4 total fatalities is a number that is quite low compared to 19,774 mishaps. How can we reduce the number of mishaps?

The method of transporting hazardous cargo can be relatively difficult, as there are many guidelines and procedures to adhere to. The use of many modes of transportation to move the hazardous material can increase the exposure of the chemicals. When hazardous cargo is being moved internationally, you can’t escape from utilizing different modes, whether it be through the air, or on the sea, once the cargo gets to the ports/airports, they still have to be transported to the final destination by truck or railroad.

One way to reduce hazardous mishaps could be the packaging the material is in. While using different modes of transportation each mode might require a different type of packaging. Will the cargo be exposed to the outside elements? The cargo might be exposed during the mode of railways but be shielded on the truck. Perhaps, a more solid and conforming packaging could reduce the spills if the mode of transportation happens to get into an accident. Rough seas, heavy turbulence could be of some blame, but the right packaging could nullify the hazardous chemicals from being too disturbed to cause a reaction. As for any handling of hazardous cargo, they must be handled by a trained professional. During the exchange point, there is an increased possibility of human errors that lead to exposures. (Hawley,2018) Can there be better training for these professionals to reduce the number of mishaps. A more stringent and hands on training could reduce that number.

Upon further research into many of these incidents, I have found that many of the hazardous materials in transport should correlate with the method of transportation. A great example, while transporting a liquid, and this can be any hazardous liquid the safest method of transporting should be a pipeline. While a pipeline can only move cargo in the liquid form, this is much safer than transporting a liquid in an 18-wheeler with a chance of it getting into an accident. Companies seem to make poor decisions on choosing the method of transporting hazardous cargo, while the right method can and should reduce the amount of mishaps.

In conclusion, as I delve deeper into the research of different modes of transporting hazardous cargo can ultimately lead to more mishaps than using just one method of transportation. In transporting these hazardous cargos that is so important to our everyday life, there must be maximum caution used to protect the people. The number of incidents can and should be drastically reduced, simply by utilizing only one method of transportation.

References

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