Handling of Hazardous Materials

The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) believes that nuclear, chemical, and biological hazardous materials pose a significant risk to individuals and communities if improperly handled or if released accidentally or intentionally into the environment.

• Individuals who are at risk, including emergency personnel, have the right to know when these materials are used in or transported through their communities.
• Emergency personnel must have immediate access to all information necessary to treat victims, protect themselves, and prevent exposure of others.
• Hazardous materials should be clearly and appropriately marked.
• Vehicles transporting hazardous materials should be clearly marked that they are used for such purposes, and drivers of those vehicles should be educated in the safe transport of hazardous materials.
• Emergency personnel responsible for the care and treatment of victims of exposure to hazardous materials should be appropriately educated and trained in methods of self-protection, patient protection, and resuscitation.
• Administrative and clinical guidelines should include principles of decontamination of personnel, patients, and vehicles, including minimum equipment requirements for personal protective equipment and recommended safety procedures.
• Emergency personnel and facilities should be updated by local, regional, state and/or federal authorities or agencies as needed to allow preparation when a defined threat is identified.

ACEP supports state and federal policies that promote adherence to these principles.