

October 25, 2012

News Release

*For Immediate Release*

### **HAZMAT Incident Mirrors Recent Training Exercise**

Springfield Fire Department (SFD) responded to a call this morning from Mercy Hospital when three patients presented with symptoms of exposure from a hazardous material spill at a Springfield factory.

Three people who came in contact with the chemical – sodium hydroxide - were decontaminated and treated for injuries.

Mercy staff quickly decontaminated the three individuals and requested the SFD crews to prepare to decontaminate others who might have come into contact with the chemical. Fortunately no one else required decontamination.

According to Assistant Fire Chief David Pennington, "I was extremely pleased with the actions taken by the staff at Mercy. They quickly identified the potential risk with this incident, took appropriate actions, and requested assistance from the Hazardous Materials (HAZMAT) team." He went on to say, "Recently, Mercy and SFD personnel conducted a training exercise that was nearly identical to this incident. It is nice to see when an actual incident seems to flow the way you expect it will during training."

Ideally, the HAZMAT team will respond directly to the site of the spill or leak to decontaminate individuals prior to arriving at an emergency room. If a spill or leak occurs and individuals are exposed, the SFD encourages residents and companies to immediately call 9-1-1.

Due to the potential risk involved in this incident, the Fire Department will conduct a review to identify actions which worked well, those that did not, and areas where improvements can be made if needed.

The SFD's HAZMAT team is called to mitigate incidents involving the release of materials that are considered hazardous, either to people or the environment. They respond to calls ranging from natural gas leaks to train derailments. Often wearing their spacesuit-like protection, the team utilizes special equipment to:

- identify unknown substances
- stop or control leaks
- decontaminate people and equipment
- render a substance harmless by neutralizing it

For more information, contact: Springfield Fire Chief David Hall at 417-864-1507.