The Pennington County Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC), with assistance from the Pennington County Emergency Management (EM) is responsible for the planning of emergencies. Under the law, planning districts are created throughout the state. This report will focus on LEPC.

The Superfund Amendment and Reauthorization Act of 1986 (SARA) has substantially increased the role of the public in an important environmental program. In accordance with SARA, each county in South Dakota was directed to establish an LEPC, composed of certain elements of both government and private industry, as well as the media and local environmental organizations. This law, is also known as SARA Title III. Title III is the section of law where the emergency planning and community right-to-know components are found.

All citizens have a right to know what hazardous chemicals are present in our community and the known risks. How are these chemicals used and where are they stored? What if an accidental chemical release should occur in Pennington County? Would you know what to do? Are fire and police departments prepared for such an emergency?

LEPC has the responsibility to communicate with the Community and County residents under the Public Right to Know Act regarding Hazardous Chemicals in Our Community and emergency planning. Chemicals are used by industry every day to produce goods we use. Hazardous chemicals are present throughout our community that are used in industry, in farming, and even in schools and hospitals.

The LEPC and Community Right-to-Know Act requires communities to plan for emergencies should an accidental release of hazardous chemicals occur. It also provides government and the public with information concerning potential chemical hazards present in our community.

The major provisions of this law require State and local governments, along with industry, to have an emergency response plan for chemical accidents to protect public health and the environment. Industries are required to report the amount and types of Extremely Hazardous Substances (EHS) it stores and uses. The industries are required to do an emergency notification of chemical accidents and releases. This information will be made available to the public by the LEPC.

EHS is any chemical that could cause serious health problems if it were accidentally released into the environment. More than 350 commonly used chemicals have been classified as EHS.

Homeowners who have EHS are NOT subject to the Public Right to Know law. However, homeowners should remain vigilant on proper storage, handling, and disposal of EHS.

For more information please contact Pennington County EM Office at 605-394-2185.