Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards: Reporting Significant Incidents (RBPS 15 & 16)

Homeland Security

Chemicals are vital to our economy. They help to develop medicines that maintain our health, provide refrigeration for our food supply, manufacture fuel for our vehicles and build the microchip that runs our smartphones. But in the hands of a terrorist, chemicals could potentially cause death and injury. The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), through the Infrastructure Security Compliance Division (ISCD), administers the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards (CFATS) program by working with facilities to ensure they have security measures in place to reduce the risks associated with certain hazardous chemicals, and prevent them from being exploited in an attack.

RBPS 15—Reporting of Significant Security Incidents and RBPS 16—Significant Security Incidents and Suspicious Activities complement each other and are both important to your facility's security.

Risk-Based Performance Standards (RBPS)

Facilities that have been determined to be high-risk and received a tier assignment from DHS must develop and implement security plans that meet applicable risk-based performance standards (RBPS). Because each chemical facility faces different security challenges, DHS established 18 RBPS for securing chemical facilities. The non-prescriptive nature of a performance standard allows the facility the flexibility to select the most cost-effective measure or activity to comply with CFATS. In addition, security measures that differ from facility to facility mean that each facility's suite of security measures present a new and unique problem for an adversary to solve.

RBPS 15—Reporting of Significant Security Incidents and RBPS 16—Significant Security Incidents and Suspicious Activities

RBPS 15 and 16 complement each other and address the importance of high-risk chemical facilities promptly and adequately identifying, investigating, and reporting all significant security incidents and suspicious activities to the appropriate facility personnel, local law enforcement, and/or DHS. The easiest way for a facility to prepare its employees to do their part is to clearly explain to its employees, and especially its security staff, how to identify, respond to, and report the incident or activity. For example, a facility can establish written procedures regarding security incidents and train employees on these protocols as part of a facility awareness training. It is important for a facility to determine what it considers to be a significant security incident or suspicious activity.

Significant Security Incidents (Physical and Cyber)

A broad number of events may be considered a security incident, ranging from trespassing, vandalism and petty theft, to cyber attacks, bomb threats, and armed attacks. Determining whether the incident is "significant" or not, and thus reported to DHS and local law enforcement, is generally within the discretion of the facility. Significant security incidents likely will include events that arise based on intentional threats that attempt to, or successfully circumvent a security measure, for example:

- An intentional breach of the facility's restricted area or perimeter
- An intentional act to forcefully or covertly bypass an access control point
- The theft or diversion or suspected theft or diversion of a chemical of interest (COI)
- An on-site fire, explosion, release or other incident requiring the attention of local first responders
- Any incident with malicious intent to adversely affect critical cyber assets, including IT equipment

Suspicious Activities

Suspicious activities could include a pattern of suspicious people or vehicles in or near the facility, photographing the facility, or other unusual activity indicating that an adversary may be probing or assessing the facility's security capabilities. This could also include suspicious orders of COI from unknown customers, customers who request cash payments, or delivery to unknown locations or businesses.

Reporting an Incident

RBPS 15 and RBPS 16 address the need for high-risk chemical facilities to promptly and adequately identify, investigate, report, and maintain records of significant security incidents and suspicious activities in or near the facility.

If a significant security incident is detected while in progress, the first call should go to local law enforcement and emergency responders via 911. Similarly, it is recommended that a facility report the incident immediately via 911 if the event has concluded but an immediate response is still necessary.

Once the incident has concluded and the facility has addressed any resulting emergency, a facility should use a non-emergency number to contact local first responders and DHS. Within DHS, report significant physical incidents to the National Infrastructure Coordinating Center (NICC) and report significant cybersecurity incidents to the U.S. Computer Emergency Readiness Team (US-CERT):

- NICC: Email NICC@DHS.GOV or call 1-202-282-9201
- US-CERT: Visit US-CERT.GOV or call 1-888-282-0870

The facility should have written procedures, either in its Site Security Plan (SSP) or elsewhere, to ensure that qualified personnel conduct thorough investigations of significant security incidents and suspicious activities to determine the level of threat, any vulnerabilities that were exploited, and what security upgrades, if any, are warranted. Additionally, facilities should share lessons learned as part of the ongoing security awareness program.

Tools and Resources

- RBPS Guidance: www.dhs.gov/publication/cfats-rbps-guidance
- Request a CFATS presentation at your facility: www.dhs.gov/request-cfats-presentation
- Request a Compliance Assistance Visit to learn about CFATS-related Authorization or Compliance Inspection: www.dhs.gov/cfats-request-compliance-assistance-visit
- The CSAT Help Desk provides timely support to chemical facility owners and operators. Call 1-866-323-2957 or email csat@hq.dhs.gov
- The CFATS Knowledge Center is a repository of CFATS FAQs, articles, and more: csat-help.dhs.gov/

Contact Information

For any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact CFATS@hq.dhs.gov or visit www.dhs.gov/chemicalsecurity.