

Module 3

Transportation and Transfer of Ethanol-Blended Fuels

Terminal Objective

Upon the successful completion of this module, participants will be able to describe how ethanol-blended fuels are transported and transferred and where the most likely points for error in these actions will exist.

Enabling Objectives

1. List common modes of transportation for ethanol-blended fuels.
2. Describe the United Nations'/Department of Transportation (UN/DOT) markings that will allow responders to identify ethanol-blended fuel transports.
3. Discuss the likelihood and potential locations of incidents involving ethanol-blended fuels.

Introduction

Given that an increased percentage of all fuel transportation-related incidents are likely to involve ethanol or ethanol-blended fuels, it is essential that emergency responders be able to quickly and effectively identify their presence at the scene of an incident.

Transportation and Placarding

Since both gasoline and ethanol-blended fuels have very similar physical and chemical characteristics, they will be transported in the same general types of containers and tanks. The most prevalent style of transport of the blended fuels that emergency responders will encounter will be by MC-306 and Department of Transportation (DOT)-406 style road tankers (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2). These tankers are non-pressurized and have a capacity up to 9,000 gallons.

Figure 3.1: MC-306/DOT-406 Cargo Tank

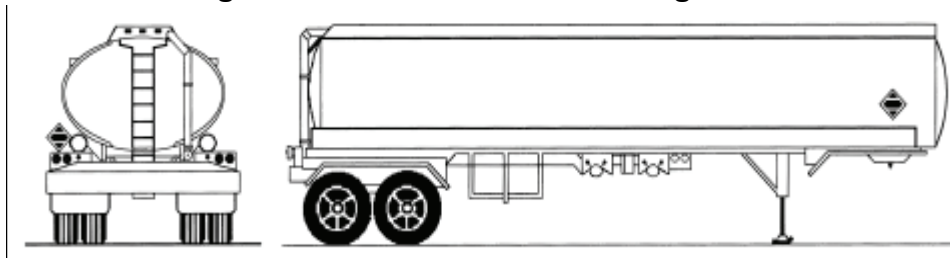


Figure 3.2: Overturned MC-306/DOT-406 Cargo Tank



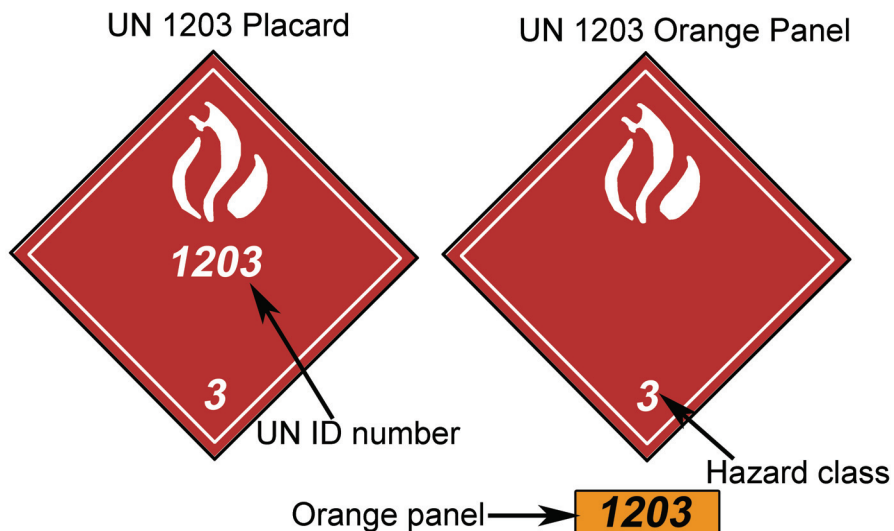
DOT has classified hazardous materials according to their primary danger and has assigned standardized symbols to identify the classes. Materials are grouped by their major hazardous characteristics; however, many materials will have other hazards as well. Ethanol and ethanol-fuel blends are in the flammable liquids category. Placards for flammable liquids have a red background with a white flame and the word “Flammable” on them (see Figure 3.3).

Figure 3.3: Flammable Placard



Tankers carrying ethanol and ethanol-fuel blends will generally be placarded with a flammable placard or United Nations' (UN) 1203 flammable placard when transporting lower ethanol concentrations up to and including E-10 blended fuels. The E-85 ethanol blend will carry a new designation for ethanol-blended fuels: UN 3475 identification. The E-95 (denatured) ethanol-blended fuel will be placarded with a UN or North American (NA) 1987 flammable placard (see Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: UN 1203 Placards for Gasoline-Blended With up to 10 Percent Ethanol



Rail tanks will be identified similarly. The different regulatory groups are addressing placarding and labeling of the various concentrations of ethanol and gasoline blends at this time. Final changes and regulations are forthcoming as of the publication of this document.

Pressure and vacuum relief devices will be the same as those that are currently found on gasoline-style transport tankers. Nearly all of these fuels are bottom loaded and unloaded by the standard 4-inch quick connect or direct connections. Valving is internal to the tanks with

breakaway piping and remote shut-off controls. Vapor recovery systems, also known as scully systems, will be the same as those currently found on gasoline tankers (see Figures 3.5 and 3.6).

Figure 3.5: DOT 111 General Service Tank Car

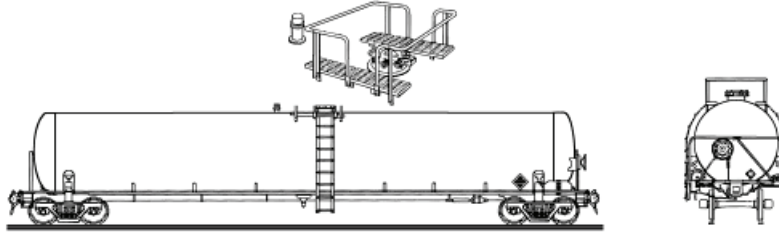


Figure 3.6: DOT 111 With Placard

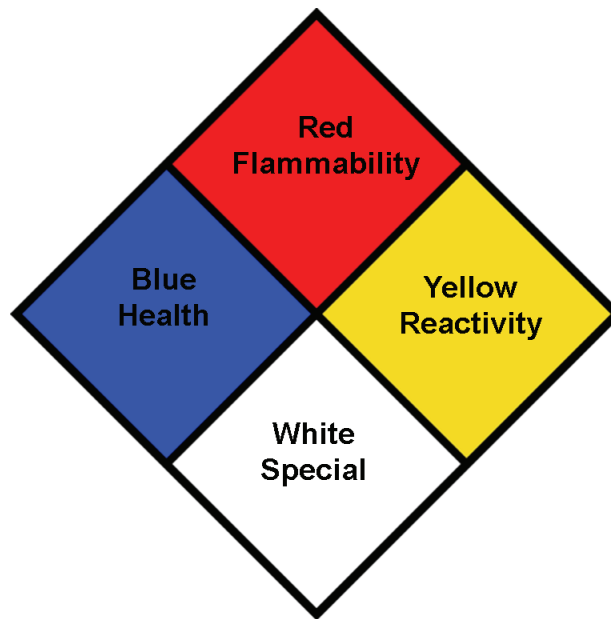


The majority of the E-95 is transported from the production facilities to the storage depots by rail. Most of the ethanol transports by rail will be in a non-pressurized (general service) tank car; these tank cars have a capacity of approximately 30,000 gallons. There are some E-95 transported by waterway on board barges or freighter ships. At this time very small amounts of ethanol-blended fuel are being experimentally transported by pipeline to evaluate the feasibility of larger-scale pipeline transfers. Storage depots that do not have rail access receive E-95 by road tankers. There is some transfer of E-95 from rail tanks directly to road tankers called *trans-loading*. This is

considered to be an interim process until permanent transfer facilities can be provided. Trans-loading has the greatest potential for transfer problems due to a lack of permanent fixtures or safety equipment. Emergency responders should be aware of this process occurring in their areas.

One more marking system of interest to emergency responders is the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 704 diamond (see Figures 3.7 and 3.8). The NFPA 704 marking system is based on the “704 diamond” and is the system used for identifying hazardous materials found within facilities. The NFPA 704 system uses colors, numbers, and special symbols to indicate the presence of hazardous materials. Each colored square indicates the type of hazard, and the higher the number (1–4), the greater the hazard. For example, the number 4 in the blue health square indicates that a very short exposure could cause death or major residual injury.

Figure 3.7: NFPA 704 Diamond

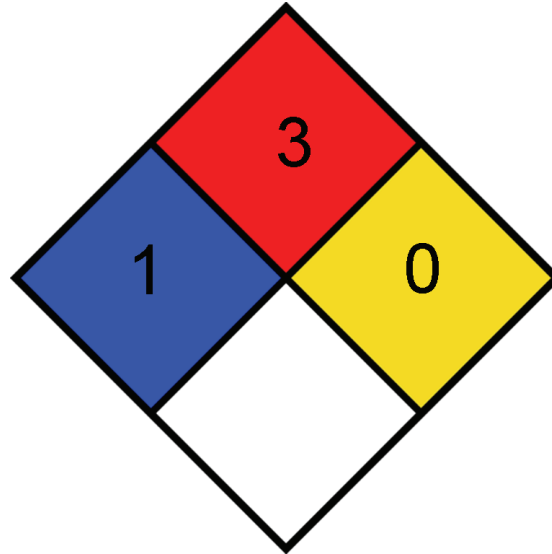


- Health: Blue
- Flammability: Red
- Reactivity: Yellow
- Special: White (special notice)

Ethanol, including E-95 and E-85, is represented by a 1 in the blue health square, indicating slight to moderate irritation. It is also represented by a 0 for reactivity (yellow) and a 3 for flammability (red)

indicating high flammability with ignition likely under most conditions. There is no commonly accepted special character (white) for ethanol, though one may be appropriate.

Figure 3.8: NFPA Diamond for E-100, E-95, E-85, and Gasoline



As most emergency response agencies are aware, most incidents involving hazardous materials occur during transportation and transfer operations. Emergency responders should be aware of areas or routes where large shipments of ethanol and ethanol-blended fuels routinely pass. E-95 has now become the leading single hazardous material transported by rail, recently surpassing liquefied petroleum gases and hydrochloric acid solutions. Unit train shipments containing 75–100 cars of E-95 are now commonly seen on some key rail routes leaving from the Midwest and carrying products to various population and distribution centers throughout the country. Most of the Midwest and other ethanol production facilities have access to rail sidings. However, many of the bulk storage fuel depots do not have rail sidings. For this reason much of the E-95 is off-loaded and transferred to tanker trucks for distribution to bulk storage facilities via highways.

Placards are able to indicate high-concentration ethanol-blended fuels. But the current state of placarding does not provide sufficient information to distinguish between gasoline and E-10 gasohol. To the responder, the difference is that E-10 does require Alcohol-Resistant (AR) foam for emergency response.

A good resource to assist in preparing for potential transportation-related hazardous materials events is the TRANSPORTATION Community Awareness and Emergency Response (TRANSCAER) Web site. TRANSCAER is a voluntary national outreach effort that focuses on assisting communities prepare for and respond to a possible hazardous material transportation incident. A

critical element of this is the flow study which is designed to identify shipments of hazardous materials that either originate or are destined to pass through a specific region. By using the data collected, responders will be able to enhance emergency planning capabilities.

Activity 3.1—Ethanol Spill Emergency

Purpose

To allow participants to determine the hazards associated with an ethanol emergency.

Participant Directions

1. For this activity you will work in groups of two to three.
2. Read the following scenario, and answer the questions:
 - What type of vehicle is this?
 - List common placards that you might find on this vehicle.
 - What other resources might be helpful to responders in this incident?
 - What are the immediate concerns and hazards?
 - What possible actions might you take at this point in the situation?

Scenario

A transport truck (see Figure 3.9) delivering fuel to the Gas 'N Matches retail site is involved in a hit and run accident. The driver advises you that the truck is carrying 3,000 gallons of fuel. There is a leak on one of the large pipes on the bottom of the trailer. Fuel is leaking onto the ground and running downhill toward a small welding facility.

Figure 3.9: Transport Truck



Summary

There are a variety of sources from which an emergency responder can glean information about chemicals involved in spill or fire incidents. Among them are Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), UN numbers, DOT placards, and NFPA 704 placards. E-95 has become the leading hazardous material transported by rail. Transfer of this fuel commonly occurs via highways as well.