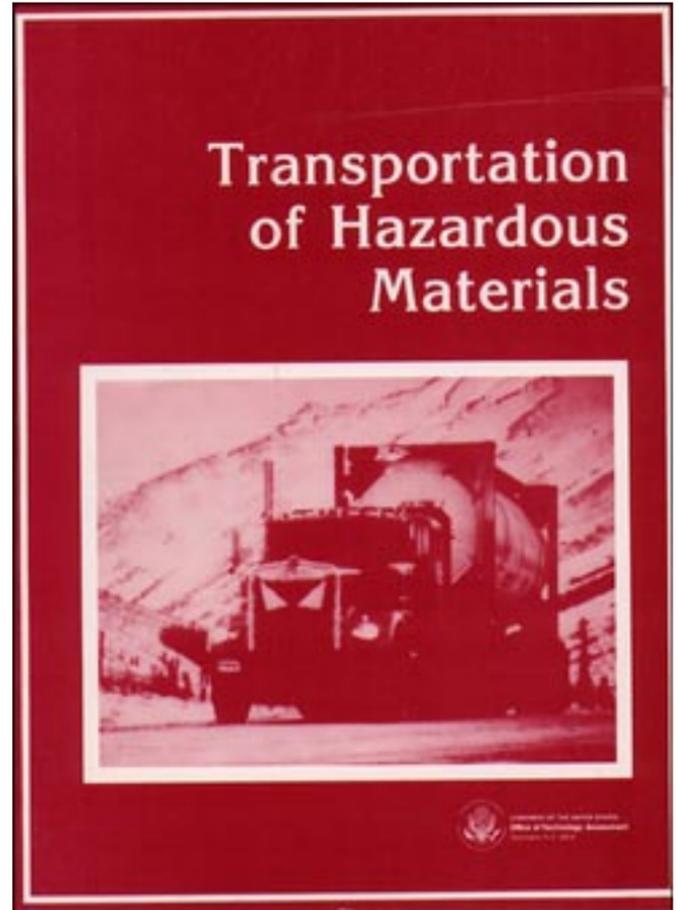


Transportation of Hazardous Materials

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Foreword

Over 11/2 billion tons of hazardous materials are transported annually in the United States. Most of these materials reach their destinations safely because it is in society's and industry's best interests to have them do so. We Americans take for granted the convenience of our transportation system and the amenities of modern life that the petroleum, chemical, and nuclear industries help make possible. Sometimes, however, an accident occurs, and a hazardous material is released, causing damage to the public and the environment. The occasional serious accident is both frightening and worrisome, while a disaster, such as the thousands of deaths and injuries in Bhopal, India, and the enormous release of radioactivity at Chernobyl, raises public apprehensions dramatically. Indeed, few activities with such statistically low risks as the transportation of hazardous materials arouse such intense public concern.

The Hazardous Materials Transportation Act, passed in 1975, is the primary Federal law governing this transportation. Largely unchanged in the past dozen years, the Act will be scrutinized carefully by Congress in the near future as it comes due for reauthorization. To determine whether major safety problems exist in the transportation of hazardous materials that should be addressed through legislation, and whether appropriate technologies exist that could improve this essential portion of our Nation's commerce, the Senate Committee on Science, Commerce, and Transportation requested the Office of Technology Assessment to undertake this study. Subsequently, the House Committee on Public Works; the Subcommittee on Commerce, Transportation, and Tourism of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce; and the Subcommittee on Government Activities and Transportation of the House Committee on Government Operations endorsed the study. OTA's report on *Transportation of Hazardous Materials* includes a comprehensive assessment of the regulations, information systems, container safety, and training for emergency response and enforcement for consideration by Congress as it deliberates on reauthorization of the Hazardous Materials Transportation Act.

The advisory panel, workshop participants, and contributors for this study played key roles in developing the major issues and contributed a broad and invaluable range of perspectives. OTA thanks them for their commitment of time and energy. Their participation does not necessarily represent endorsement of the contents of the report, for which OTA bears sole responsibility.



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NOTE: OTA appreciates and is grateful for the valuable assistance and thoughtful critiques provided by the advisory panel members. The panel does not, however, necessarily approve, disapprove, or endorse this report. OTA assumes full responsibility for the report and the accuracy of its content.

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