

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Production and use of chemicals have increased globally over the years. Despite their multiple benefits to human beings, chemicals are reactive, unstable in nature and capable of changing, which can cause chemical accidents. In many instances, chemical manufacturing plants are located close to human dwellings as in the case of Zamdela Township. These chemical plants expose surrounding communities to chemical hazards such as explosion, pollution, gas releases etcetera. Owing to the nature of materials, chemical accidents often require specialised response measures. A more compounding challenge relating to chemical hazards is that they are often not understood by the community. Appropriate measures to deal with chemical hazards are often complex and should be communicated to the local emergency personnel and to the local community through public awareness campaigns.

This study sought to probe what the local authority has done to raise awareness in respect of prevailing chemical hazards in Zamdela Township.

The study found that the majority of participants were not aware of awareness programs being implemented for chemical hazards. There was also an indication from participants that the majority of the community was not aware of procedures to be followed in case of chemical accidents. Positive findings, however, are that the majority of participants indicated that they were involved in community programmes such as volunteerism, education and training and also that they were willing to attend awareness meetings. The results were also supported by the interview with the Fezile Dabi District Municipality disaster management official who confirmed that their focus was more on HAZMAT affecting communities alongside the N1 and N3 roads rather than on the chemical hazards. The results indicated that there was still a lot to be done in educating the community about chemical hazards in Zamdela Township.

The study concludes with recommendations which may be used by the municipality to educate the community on chemical hazards, and also on measures to improve awareness campaigns through schools and community organisations.