

Abstract

Introduction

Sri Lanka Ports Authority Colombo, which was founded in 1979, is a state-owned major commercial port in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Colombo handles cargo storage facilities, including dangerous cargo warehouse operations involving dangerous chemical raw materials. There is a risk of an unexpected chemical emergency leading to a disaster due to these reasons. The aim of this study was to assess knowledge, attitudes and practices on disaster preparedness in chemical emergencies among security officers at Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Colombo, since security officers will be the first responders in an emergency.

Methodology

A descriptive cross sectional study was carried out using a self administered questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of questions under three main sub topics namely, knowledge, attitudes and practices on disaster preparedness in chemical emergencies. The study population was security officers of security division in Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Colombo. The study period was from 1st of November to 31st of November 2016.

Results and discussion

The response rate was 75.5% (n=453). Among the respondents, majority 36% (n=163) were within the age group of 31-40. According to the data received, 74% (n=335) had a working experience more than ten years. Over 80% of the respondents had identified the hazard label (IMDG code) and the use of the hazard label correctly, while only 51% had answered correctly on question regarding adult cardio-pulmonary resuscitation. Among the respondents, 50% (n=226) had selected the wrong answer regarding irritant gases. Overall knowledge on decontamination and decontamination procedure was satisfactory. Majority had positive attitudes on their roles and responsibilities in disaster preparedness in chemical emergencies at Sri Lanka Ports authority, Colombo. When considering the practices, majority believes that the amount and the training received on personal protective equipments (PPE), training on chemical emergencies and basic first aid is inadequate.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The knowledge and attitudes on disaster preparedness in chemical emergencies among security officers at Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Colombo was satisfactory, while attention should be focused more on practices.

The security officers should be given training on giving basic first aid, dealing with chemical emergencies, and handling on personal protective equipments (PPE) at the beginning of their service and periodically while on service.