



## SAFETY NOTICE 10-001

### Emerging Trends in Suicides

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Issue Date:	February 5, 2010
Distribution:	All personnel; all agencies
Pages:	02

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*Note: This information is shared by Office of Emergency Management, Middlesex County, NJ, regarding an emerging trend in suicides.*

Sent: Friday, January 08, 2010 11:39 AM

#### Background:

Recently, there has been some information posted on the internet referencing a new way of committing suicide that appears to be originating in Japan. The method consists of mixing two chemicals that can be bought over the counter at local stores. This method is referred to as "Detergent Suicide" which is a very dangerous situation for first responders. If you are not familiar with this type of suicide it is so named for the ingredients utilized that when mixed together produces a deadly "Hydrogen Sulfide" gas that once inhaled acts as an asphyxiate. This method of committing suicide is popular in Japan and references to it can be found on the internet. Simply put, chemicals that are readily available to the public, such as Muriatic or Sulfuric acid, mixed with organic phosphates, such as toilet bowl cleaner or insecticides will create the gas. Concentrated in a small area, if the levels exceed 100 parts per million (ppm) the atmosphere is potentially toxic.

The process appears to be quick and painless. Three known cases have been documented in the United States and one in Toronto including one still under investigation that occurred this past weekend in Middlesex County, NJ. The suicides occurred in personal vehicles. Each party left a note warning first responders of the dangers.

If a first responder opens the vehicle and inhales, they too will be exposed to a noxious possible fatal gas.

In the event that your agency responds to situations where this method of suicide might be used the following should be considered:

## Warning signs:

1. Subject appears unconscious or asleep in a contained area (usually a vehicle).
2. Subject may be wearing safety glasses and medical gloves (required to handle chemicals).
3. Windows are taped (prevents gas from escaping).
4. Possible note to warn of the dangers present.
5. First responders and emergency service agencies could be compromised if the gases, usually concentrated within small spaces like a car, bathroom or storage area is released without the proper safeguards in place; namely evacuation of the area, and release supervised by Hazmat personnel who are properly equipped to do it.
6. A first responder's hazmat training (awareness and operations) regarding this method is key in saving their lives. **If you enter an area and it has a chemical odor take this as a clue to exit the area.** Hydrogen Sulfide (rotten egg smell) and some other chemicals will diminish your sense of smell as you venture deeper into a contaminated area. Keep in mind the safety of the first responder is paramount; entering an atmosphere where the hazards are not known can be extremely dangerous.
7. Medical Considerations:
  1. Remove victim(s) from the exposure without compromising emergency personnel's safety.
  2. Support respiratory effort.
  3. Remove contaminated clothing immediately.
  4. Conduct emergency gross wash decontamination for 3 minutes.
  5. Transport patient to medical facility.

**These incidents are not common responses for emergency personnel please exercise extreme caution if this method of suicide is suspect.**