NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY AFFAIRS
DIVISION OF FIRE SAFETY
OFFICE OF THE STATE FIRE MARSHAL

SECURITY ALERT

PO Box 809, Trenton, NJ 08625-0809 (609) 633-6070 SECURITY ALERT 15-2

Propane Tanks May Be Used for Anhydrous Ammonia Storage During Illegal Manufacture of Methamphetamine (U//FOUO)

Issued April 2015

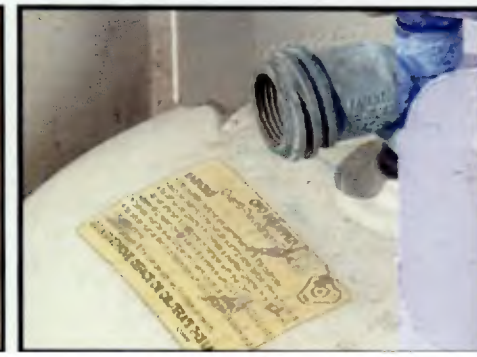
The New Jersey State Fire Marshal Office has received intelligence that there is a possibility that illegal manufacturers of methamphetamine (Crystal Meth) may be using commercially available LP Gas cylinders for the transport and storage of anhydrous ammonia used in the manufacture of the drug. One method of drug manufacture uses anhydrous ammonia in the reaction process, and is often stolen from farms and agricultural supply businesses and transported and stored easily in portable (20lb or 33lb) propane cylinders.

Anhydrous ammonia is not compatible with brass and will corrode the valve and fittings on a propane cylinder.

- The valve may become weakened and fail, causing a leak.
- The internal threads securing the brass valve to the neck of the cylinder may also become weak and eventually fail.
- As the outside temperature rises, the internal pressure increases, placing greater stress on the weakened valve and threads.
- The corrosion of the valve and fittings may create a dangerous situation that can be detected when discarded cylinders are found, when cylinders are returned to retailers for exchange or refill, or when retailers visit customer locations for fills or exchanges.
- If suddenly released, corrosive ammonia vapor may cause possible skin damage, severe respiratory injury or even death.

What to Look For

- Distinctive blue-green corrosion on the brass valve. See photos.
- Evidence of tampering with the connection threads.
- Any ammonia odor around the cylinder or valve body.



How to Respond

If you have reason to suspect anhydrous ammonia is, or has been, inside a propane cylinder:

- Use extreme caution when handling the cylinder, since the valve may be weakened and sudden jarring may cause valve failure.
- Do NOT open the valve to confirm what is inside. You may not get the valve properly closed again.
- If you smell ammonia near or around the cylinder, if the cylinder appears to be leaking, or if you can't properly close the valve, immediately notify the Hazardous Material Team having jurisdiction for assistance or guidance.
- Segregate the suspect cylinder so it will not be re-integrated with functional cylinders and re-filled again.

Please report all suspicious activity to the proper authorities, local law enforcement and the State Fusion Center and ensure a (SAR) Suspicious Activity Report is generated. In addition please report all incidents to the ***Division of Fire Safety Intelligence Office at 609-292-4109*** for investigation.

PLEASE POST IMMEDIATELY (U//FOUO)