



WARNING



To my fellow firefighters:

You may have heard of this already, but in haz refresher tonight we were told of a disturbing new trend in suicides: poisoning with common household chemicals. People have discovered that you can combine two easily-accessible chemicals to produce a gas that knocks you out, then causes cardiac arrest within minutes. The chosen method seems to be locking yourself in your car and then doing this. Unfortunately, when a firefighter sees an unconscious person locked in their car... what do we do? Break a window. Force a door. Gain entry. Do that... and you're on firefighterclosecalls.com or your spouse gets a visit from the chaplain. There were two cases mentioned tonight so far- the one below, and one in Georgia- and today I found more info on firefighterclosecalls.com. Both victims below were "nice" enough to post a hazardous material sign on their windows, so the FFs had some warning BUT most people won't be so "thoughtful". And of course these things spread like crazy on the internet, so a few isolated cases could become a lot more. We all need to be aware of this and take the appropriate precautions!! Research this, present it, spread the word!

<http://www.firefighterclosecalls.com/fullstory.php?81417>

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

Recently a new way to commit suicide has been discovered by mixing two chemicals that can be bought over the counter at local stores. They are Bonide – a sulfur spray used as an insecticide for fruit trees and hydrochloric (muriatic) acid. Once mixed, the chemicals produce heat and a flammable, noxious gas that causes the subject to pass out and the heart stop within minutes. The process appears to be quick and painless. Two recent cases, one in Pasadena, California and the other at Lake Allatoona in Bartow County, Georgia, involved young men in their early 20's. Both were found locked inside their cars with the chemicals. Each left a note on the car warning anyone around of danger. The car at Lake Allatoona had been taped to prevent gas from escaping.

Does this sound like a routine call that most of us would respond to and take similar action? It's Sunday morning 0730 hours, you respond to a person down in auto. You locate a car in the empty parking lot of a business. The engine and med unit pull up near the vehicle and personnel see a person inside that appears to be asleep or unconscious. Wearing safety glasses and medical gloves, you walk up to the car and knock on the window. The patient does not respond to your knock on the window, and the doors are locked. What action will you take? Will you hurry to make patient access? Will you use a lockout tool, center punch, or halligan to make entry?

You make access, a rush of warm air comes out of the vehicle and you smell a sharp odor. You have just become a victim and have been exposed to a noxious possibly fatal gas.

What could you have done differently? You are the first-in unit. How should you respond to this type of incident?

1. Do not become complacent! Your response should be similar on every call.
2. Be well trained, know your job, do your job.
3. Start your size-up from the time a call is dispatched.
4. Establish a strong command and control the scene.
5. Don't go rushing in.
6. Survey the scene.
7. Does the scene look routine?
8. Do you see anything unusual? (Example: A note on the window, containers inside the vehicle and taped windows or vents).
9. Is the scene safe?
10. Wear the appropriate PPE.
11. Establish a Hot Zone.
12. Develop a plan of action and coordinate activities.
13. Call for additional resources. (Hazmat Team, PD, etc.)
14. Did PD arrive prior to FD and become contaminated requiring emergency decon and first

aid?

The call listed in the first paragraph of this document started as a routine person down call. This type of incident can easily expand into a full blown Hazardous Materials Incident with a multijurisdictional response. Be aware of this new way to commit suicide and don't become a victim. Use common sense and stay safe.

To review a newspaper article and pictures regarding the suicide in Pasadena, California, visit: <http://beaconmedianews.com/2008/08/26/23-year-old-man-commits-suicide-with-chemicals-inside-2003-vw-bug/>

To review a newspaper article and pictures regarding the suicide in Barton, Georgia visit: <http://www.daily-tribune.com/index.cfm?event=news.view&id=674BB0CD-19B9-E2E2-676EC6D537211BFE>

(REPRINTED BELOW)

<http://beaconmedianews.com/2008/08/26/23-year-old-man-commits-suicide-with-chemicals-inside-2003-vw-bug/>
23 Year Old Man Commits Suicide with Chemicals inside 2003 VW Bug



A newer model, white VW Beetle was sealed off from public Monday as it was believed to contain hazardous chemicals as well as a body of a young man in his 20's.

Pasadena police and fire officials staged at Halstead (just behind the Best Buy shopping Center) 2:40 p.m. HazMat teams from Glendale were quickly called in.

The vehicle and man had been reported missing earlier. According to Lisa Derderian Fire Dept Public Information Officer and was in a corner of the parking lot behind Ethan Allen on Rosemead in Pasadena.

The windows to the car were rolled up and apparently locked. The temperature was about 100 degrees when officials arrived. There was allegedly a sign on the vehicle warning people of the potential danger.



“Hazardous chemicals, possible pesticides and possibly even a bomb.” Were involved one source told the Pasadena Independent. Area businesses were evacuated including Traders Joe’s, Ethan Allen, and several computer research facilities in the immediate area.

The chemicals, although determined initially to be household, were enough to be considered a “serious threat” and possibly deadly in combination thereof.

Engine 37 from Pasadena established a staging area down wind for incoming units and contacted PPD to gather more information. Battalion 3 arrived on scene and established Halstead command. Upon further investigation and information gathered from PPD, it was determined that the LACO specialized haz-mat unit would be needed. The chemicals were unknown and the area including several businesses was evacuated as a precaution. The haz-mat team approached and evaluated the vehicle and surrounding area.

Erring on the side of caution, two Glendale fighters in highly protective gear with oxygen canisters on their backs carefully examined the car and took a few photos and examined the undercarriage. After about 10 minutes the firefighters returned to the command post to report their findings.

Many witnesses said they had seen the car there since 7 am. According to PIO Lisa Dederian there was a pre-printed Danger sign with a skull and crossbones pasted on the locked vehicle which added to the extreme precautionary measures taken by the fire and police dept.

It appeared that the Police and Fire dept. had a suicide on their hands with some serious complications and possible health hazard to the immediate community.

Approximately 70 fire personnel responded to this call.



Copyright 2008 Beacon Media, Inc.

Hazardous materials teams from the Glendale, Pasadena and Burbank fire departments and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department arrived on scene and police cordoned off most of the parking lot.

An autopsy will be conducted to determine the actual cause of death.

<http://www.daily-tribune.com/index.cfm?event=news.view&id=674BB0CD-19B9-E2E2-676EC6D537211BFE>

Bartow HAZMAT responds to apparent suicide scene

Wednesday, Dec 24, 2008



Bartow Fire Department Battalion Chief David Levey, right, talks Tuesday with Deputy Michael Burlison and Ranger Chris Purvis at the scene of an apparent suicide by chemical. STAFF/Skip Butler
Bartow County HAZMAT workers, in addition to other city and county emergency crews, were called Tuesday to a day use area on Lake Allatoona where a man had apparently committed suicide using hazardous chemicals.

Around 12 p.m. Bartow County fire fighters, deputies and emergency medical workers responded to a call that a man was found by a park ranger sitting in a car at Cooper Branch Day Use Area No. 1 on Ga. 20 Spur. According to police scanner traffic, the man did not appear to be breathing.

In that car were two buckets containing a yellow substance.

"The car the Corp. of Engineers discovered had a note on the window that said, 'Caution,' and it had the chemical name on it," BCFD Bt. Chief David Levey said, adding that the substance was a mixture of chemicals including sulfuric acid.

"We made an entry with our HAZMAT team to see if the victim was able to be saved and to extract him from the vehicle," Levey said. "What we did after that was identify the chemical and contain it."

Levey said it appeared as if the man had mixed the chemicals in the back of the vehicle. He added that the cause of his death was likely exposure to the chemicals.

Bartow County Sheriff's Office Lt. Greg Clark said that based on evidence at the scene, the incident is thought to be a suicide. The victim's name was not been released.