



## Information Bulletin

# Update: Responder Safety and Chemical Suicides

NOTE: This information in this bulletin, originally released on (date), has been updated and is being re-issued in response to several recent incidents in New York State and elsewhere which have resulted in injuries to emergency response personnel due to exposure to the chemicals involved.

Chemical suicides have plagued the United States since 2008, and continue to be on the rise. Mixing of sulfur based compounds with an acid, both of which are found in common household cleaning agents, will create deadly hydrogen sulfide gas. “How To” instructions for chemical suicides continue to be readily available on the internet, giving very explicit information on how to make and generate hydrogen sulfide gas.

While individuals involved in chemical suicide incidents often post warning signs to alert response personnel and others of the presence of toxic gases, there is no guarantee these signs will be present or other indicators of a chemical suicide incident will be readily recognizable. ALL responders must remain vigilant for indicators of a potential chemical suicide incident including:

- “Man Down” or unresponsive individual in a sealed vehicle or structure;
- The presence of buckets or open containers used to mix the chemicals to create hydrogen sulfide gas;
- Yellow residue inside the vehicle, indicating a chemical reaction has occurred;
- Bottles of household chemicals such as muriatic acid, toilet bowl cleaner or lime sulfur;
- “Warning Signs” posted in the windows of the vehicle or doors of a structure.

The New York State Office of Fire Prevention & Control (OFPC) has established best practice guidelines for a response to a chemical suicide incident for responders and, in conjunction with the Central Florida Intelligence Exchange, a chemical suicides guide for dispatcher. This guidance is available for download from our website, [www.dhses.ny.gov/ofpc/publications/documents/chemsuicides.pdf](http://www.dhses.ny.gov/ofpc/publications/documents/chemsuicides.pdf). It is recommended the flow chart be laminated and placed in all response vehicles.

Response personnel should also be alert for potential “suicide pact” type incidents which may involve more than one individual, and recognize that these same methods of creating hydrogen sulfide gas may be used for homicides or to booby trap locations used for illegal activities, such as the sale or production of methamphetamine and other illegal drugs.

It is highly likely that there will continue to be an increase in these incidents. Please contact the Special Operations Branch at 518-474-6746 with any questions or requests for additional information.

#### Sources:

New York State Office of Fire Prevention & Control Special Operations Branch: **Chemical Suicides Training**.  
The Central Florida Intelligence Exchange, **Chemical Suicides Identification Guide for 911 Communications**.

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