General Indicators of Homemade Explosive (HME) Labs for First Responders

Emergency Service Personnel should be aware of potential precursor materials that could possibly indicate a lab for suspicious HME/bomb-making activity. HME/bomb-making labs use common household chemicals that together in bulk should be considered suspicious. Below is additional information concerning HME Labs.

• All HMEs are sensitive to heat, shock, friction, and electrostatic discharge; sensitivity will vary based on the type of explosive.
• HMEs can be made from commonly available commercial chemicals with relatively minimal effort.
• HMEs can be made by physically mixing ingredients or by chemically reacting ingredients.
• For some HMEs, when the ingredients chemically react, small crystalline solids form that settle to the bottom of the container.
• Some sensitive HMEs may be manufactured in a cold and/or frigid water bath or kept in a refrigerator or freezer to prevent explosion.
• HME Labs closely resemble clandestine narcotic labs consisting of the same chemicals, acids, bases and lab equipment.

General HME/Bomb-making Indicators

• Large amounts of chemical precursors
• Plans, recipes, schematics, formulas & extremist literature
• Disassembled electrical components
• Heating plates, ice baths, lab equipment
• Unusual fumes, chemical odors, unidentified powders
• Pipe sections, pressure cookers or other potential bomb containers
• Counter surveillance measures such as unusual & excessive CCTV feeds of the surrounding property

Examples of HME Labs and Precursors

1. If you think you have found an HME, DO NOT HANDLE
2. Secure the scene immediately
3. Retreat & contact command ASAP from a safe distance away

Report Any Suspicious Activity to

New York State Terrorism Tips Hotline

1-866-SAFE-NYS (1-866-723-3697)

All calls are toll free and will remain strictly confidential.