



# CHEMICAL SUICIDES

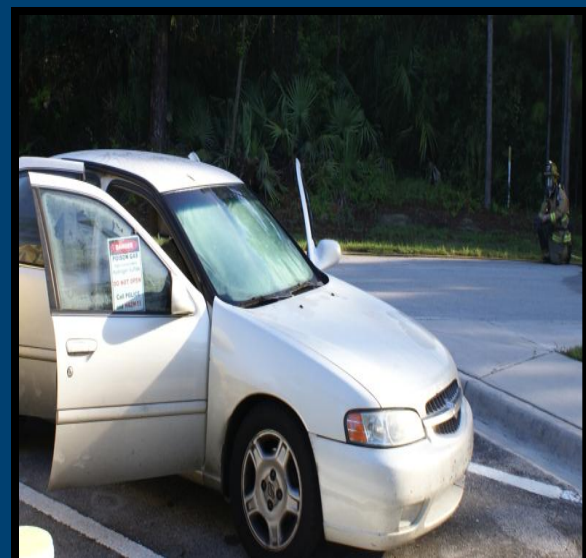
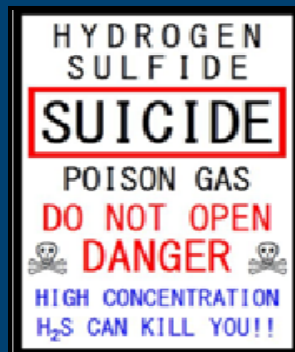
## Identification Guide for 911 Communications



The purpose of this document is to provide 911 call takers and dispatchers with a guideline for identifying key components of a chemical suicide .

**POLICE LINES DO NOT CROSS**

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February 2011

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# CHEMICAL SUICIDES

## Guide for 911 Communications

### CHEMICAL SUICIDE AWARENESS

The first step to preventing injury or death in response to a chemical suicide is awareness. An incident is considered a chemical suicide when an individual mixes common household chemicals that contain a hydrochloric acid base combined with lime sulfur compound. Both products are easy to purchase at any hardware or grocery store. These incidents typically occur in vehicles, closets, bathrooms, or other small confined spaces where the concentration of gas can quickly accumulate to lethal levels.

It is recommended that the indicators provided in this guide be placed in Call Handling Guides to assist Communications personnel with recognizing a chemical suicide. A careful size-up of any situation involving an unresponsive person in an enclosed space is critical for responder safety. Size-up starts with the initial call taker and dispatcher.



### EXPOSURE LEVELS

<b>LOW EXPOSURE</b>	<b>0 - 10 ppm</b>	<b>Caller is complaining of minor irritation in eyes, nose, and throat.</b>
<b>MODERATE EXPOSURE</b>	<b>10 - 50 ppm</b>	<b>Caller is complaining of headache, dizziness, nausea and vomiting, coughing and difficulty breathing.</b>
<b>HIGH EXPOSURE</b>	<b>50 - 200 ppm</b>	<b>Caller is complaining of severe respiratory irritation, eye irritation/acute conjunctivitis. Note: This level may also cause shock and convulsions, coma and death.</b>

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### INDICATORS OF A CHEMICAL SUICIDE

#### Unresponsive Person in a Vehicle

When a citizen calls 911 to request medical assistance for a person that is unconscious or “sleeping” inside of a vehicle, it is important to ask questions about the scene to determine if the incident is a possible chemical suicide. It is critical that the caller and citizens stay clear from the vehicle if it meets any of the following criteria:

- Warning sign(s) taped to the vehicle door or placed inside
  - May indicate HAZMAT or SUICIDE
  - Note: not all chemical suicide cases will post warning signs*
- Smell of rotten egg or sulfur
  - The smell of rotten egg usually indicates the presence of hydrogen sulfide
  - Note: Some callers will notice the smell immediately, where others may not*
- Smell of bitter or burnt almonds
  - The smell of bitter almond usually indicates the presence of hydrogen cyanide
  - Note: Some callers will notice the smell immediately, where others may be immune*
- Unresponsive subject inside the vehicle
  - Someone committing suicide with the proper chemical mixture will be dead instantly
  - May have seatbelt fasten to prevent body from falling onto horn, alerting others
  - In several documented cases, subjects wore goggles and gloves, to prevent chemical burn before their death
- Suicide note inside vehicle
- Pennies in the vehicle or console area will be tarnished with residue

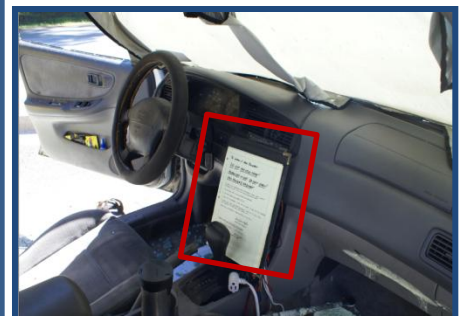
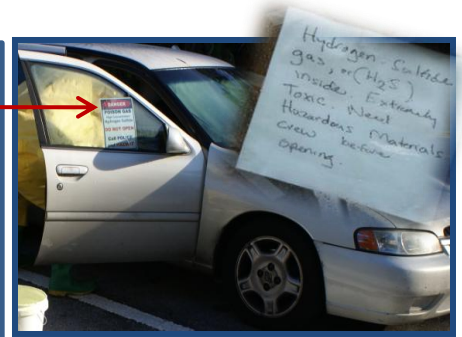


Photo Sources: St. Lucie County (FL)



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### INDICATORS OF A CHEMICAL SUICIDE

#### Unresponsive Person in a Vehicle cont...

- Empty household cleaning containers on the floor board or seat

*Note: Bonide pesticide containers commonly have purple caps and are found in many chemical suicide cases*



- One or more large buckets will be visible for mixing the acid base and sulfur chemical

*Note: Subjects may use the center console or glove box to mix the chemicals*

- Vehicle's inside door handles removed
  - This prevents the subject from changing their mind by stopping the suicide process

- Yellow-green or white residue on the seats or on the dashboard
  - Evidence of chemical residue has been found in almost all chemical suicide cases

- Duct tape to cover air vents
  - This prevents the deadly chemical mixture from seeping out, keeping the vehicle closed

- Tools to mix the chemicals will be present

- Windows fogged or tinted with yellow/green residue

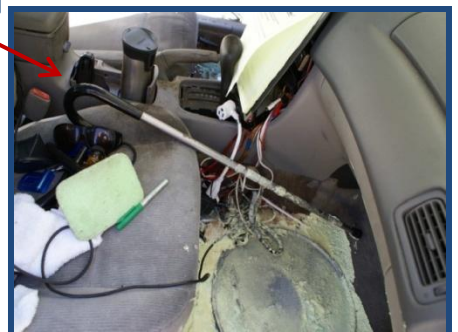


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### INDICATORS OF A CHEMICAL SUICIDE

#### Check the Well Being

Law enforcement officers have also discovered cases of chemical suicides after being dispatched to a “check the well being” call. These incidents have occurred in small confined spaces such as closets and bathrooms inside hotel rooms, college dorms and apartments. If the caller is at the location, gather information on the below indicators to recognize the potential of a chemical suicide:

- Masking tape or towels sealing a door to prevent fumes from exiting the confined area
- Smell of rotten egg or sulfur coming from the room
  - The smell of rotten egg usually indicates the presence of hydrogen sulfide
  - Note: Some callers will notice the smell immediately, where others may not*
- Smell of bitter or burnt almonds coming from the room
  - The smell of bitter almond usually indicates the presence of hydrogen cyanide
  - Note: Some callers will notice the smell immediately, where others may be immune*
- Suicide note taped to the door or mirror
- Warning sign(s) taped to the mirror or door
  - May indicate HAZMAT or SUICIDE
  - Note: Not all chemical suicide cases will post warning signs*
- Empty household cleaning containers that contain acid and sulfur
  - Note: Bonide pesticide containers commonly have purple caps and are found in many chemical suicide cases*
- One or more large buckets will be present to mix the chemicals



Photo Sources: NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services

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The Central Florida Intelligence Exchange is an intelligence fusion center, dedicated to the safety and security of our emergency responders. For more information regarding this guide or chemical suicide awareness, please contact:



Kristie Toruno  
Emergency Services Sector Coordinator,  
Central Florida Intelligence Exchange (CFIX)  
[kristie.toruno@ocfl.net](mailto:kristie.toruno@ocfl.net)  
407-858-3906

Jacob Oreshan III  
Deputy Chief,  
NYS Office of Fire Prevention Control  
Hazardous Materials/Homeland Security Bureau  
[jake.Oreshan@dos.state.ny.us](mailto:jake.Oreshan@dos.state.ny.us)  
518-474-6746

- ❖ Instructional material provided by the New York State Office of Fire Prevention & Control
  - ❖ Photos provided by St. Lucie County and New York State Office of Fire Prevention & Control
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