
CHAPTER II	Operations
SUBJECT 3	Emergency Operations
TOPIC 26	Chemical Suicides

SCOPE

Chemical suicide has been on the rise since 2008. This method of suicide first became prevalent in Japan and has spread across the world with numerous “How-To” websites providing detailed instructions. This form of suicide can be potentially dangerous to the first responder. The chemical involved is usually Hydrogen Sulfide (H₂S), Hydrogen Cyanide (HCN) or any other gas that may displace oxygen. These chemicals are produced using readily available household chemicals and are mixed in an open container (Garbage can, bucket, pots or a cooler). The two primary ingredients are an acid based product (Toilet bowl cleansers, acidic based drain cleaners or acids such as muriatic or sulfuric) and sulfur based compound (detergents, pesticides) and when combined they produce H₂S. These suicides are usually staged in small confined spaces such as vehicles or small rooms in order to increase the concentration of the chemical. This advisory shall serve as interim procedures until formal procedures can be adopted.

OBJECTIVE

To outline the Cincinnati Fire Department's, duties and responsibilities at a Chemical Suicide incident.

Goals:

Save Lives

Prevent Injuries

Reduction of Property Loss

Restoration of Vital Services

1. Scene Size-Up - Recognition

- a. Initial report of a patient/unresponsive person in a vehicle or other confined space (Bathroom/closet). Be suspicious if the vehicle is parked well away from other vehicles.
- b. Strange odor in the area: Rotten eggs or sewer gas (H₂S), Bitter Almonds (HCN)
- c. Be alert for warning signs stating to “Stay away – Chemical hazard” or “Call Hazmat”
- d. Efforts to seal the environment with tape, towels, plastic or weather stripping.
- e. Presence of containers of common ingredients.
- f. Unusual presence of buckets, pots or other containers for mixing.

If any of the above factors are observed, request a hazmat response be dispatched. If located in a building – evacuate the entire building

2. Initial Response Actions - If any of the above indicators are present.
 - a. Determine responsiveness or signs of life.
 - i. Tap on the glass to illicit a response from the patient
 - ii. Observe for signs of breathing
 - b. If patient has signs of life remove the patient from the area to fresh air after donning PPE. **Firefighters must be wearing fire clothes with SCBA when opening the space and removing the patient. (H₂S & HCN are flammable and toxic gases)** Inhaling even a small dose of the gas will be toxic to the rescuer.
 - c. Perform emergency decon of a viable patient by removing all clothing. Double bag removed clothing. Flush with water for 5-15 minutes if the patient has contacted the liquid. The patient's breath may continue to off-gas. The standard 4-gas meter will monitor for H₂S.
 - d. Avoid contact with any of the material.
 - e. If the patient is unresponsive and does not have any signs of life do not open the confining space. Wait for the arrival of the hazmat response and District Chief. Avoid disturbing the scene and attempt to preserve as much evidence as possible.

CHEMICAL SUICIDE

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