

## **Durango Colorado Attempted Haz Mat Suicide February 25, 2010**

On Thursday, February 25, 2010 at approximately 1930, a page-out of the Southwest Colorado Hazmat Team was made to have members report to the local hospital, Mercy Regional Medical Center. It was reported that a person was being transported to the hospital covered from head to toe in an “oily substance”. With that information, it was requested that the haz mat unit respond directly to the hospital with any available analytical equipment to identify the material. Most team members were responding from their individual homes and went directly to the hospital.

Upon arrival at the hospital, the patient was observed to have been covered with a dried-on brown material all over the upper torso and covering his head. The responders to the initial incident scene reported finding the patient wrapped in a plastic tarp with his pants down around his ankles, no shirt on and acting irrationally and somewhat combative. He was discovered outside in a snow bank near the back porch of his mobile home. (Figure 1)

At the hospital, the patient did not have any type of oily material on his body that was retrievable that could be sampled and analyzed. A decision was made to decon the individual (no field decontamination had taken place at this point) in the hospital’s isolated decontamination room prior to taking him into the ER. The patient was reported as combative earlier in the incident and was restrained on the gurney. The patient was transferred to a plastic lined disposable tub on a gurney by three haz mat techs and 1 ER nurse who proceeded to the decon room. The patient’s few remaining clothes were removed and he was thoroughly scrubbed and washed multiple times to remove the dried material on the skin. He was then transported to the ER on a clean gurney where he was restrained and assessed.

The haz mat team members were then released from the hospital and proceeded to the mobile home where the victim was found. It was reported that up to 12 emergency responders had subdued and handled the patient and there was concern about possible contamination/exposure. Snow in the area was waist deep making it difficult to maneuver around the mobile home and approach the porch area from outside.

Two haz mat team members entered the victims trailer and found warning notes scrolled on a whiteboard in the trailer home kitchen warning people to leave and “Call 911 Haz Mat”. (Figure 2)

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Air monitoring was conducted using a 4-gas monitor with PID which included an H<sub>2</sub>S sensor. No detection of H<sub>2</sub>S, CO or VOCs was observed.

The haz mat team members found a bottle of Vet Brand “Lime Sulfur Dip” (Figure 2) on the porch area where the patient was discovered along with a dog bowl containing an unknown viscous green liquid.

Field analysis of the sampled product in the dog dish confirmed it was a sulfur mixture. However the pH taken of a liquid pooled on some of the plastic was measured as a strong acid (pH 2) and the viscous green liquid in the bowl was found to have a pH of 12.

No other chemical containers were found in or around the porch area.

On the following Sunday, the patient reported to hospital staff that he had been attempting suicide and he had mixed the Lime Sulfur Dip with muriatic acid and Drano drain cleaner in hopes of generating hydrogen sulfide gas (H<sub>2</sub>S). He had draped plastic over himself to create a tent to contain the hydrogen sulfide gas. The patient is expected to recover without any long lasting complications.

Figure 1



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Figure 2

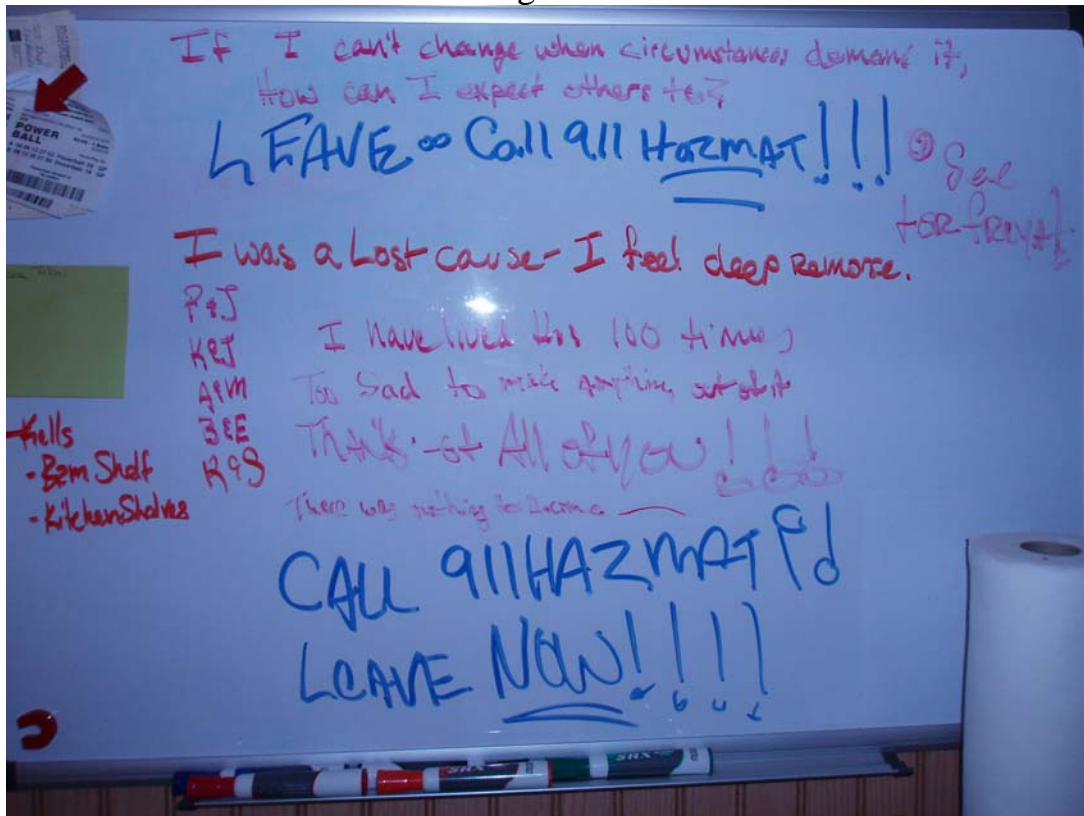


Figure 3

