

## 'Detergent Suicide' Raises Concern in Richland

By: Bill Devlin, PhillyBurbs.com  
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A 33-year-old man killed himself Wednesday afternoon by mixing a lethal concoction of household chemicals as he sat in a car in a detached garage in Richland.

Two Richland police officers were first on the scene on the 800 block of Cherry Road but did not open the car doors after seeing signs taped to the window warning of poisonous gas inside the car.

Bucks County Coroner Dr. Joseph Campbell said the victim was poisoned by hydrogen sulfide gas, which can be produced by mixing common chemicals.



A 33-year-old man killed himself Wednesday afternoon by mixing a lethal concoction of household chemicals as he sat in a car in a detached garage in Richland. (Photo by WPVI-TV).

"It's highly lethal," said Campbell.

According to the coroner, the victim posted signs identifying the gas and telling responders to call the hazmat units.

"It is lucky for those officers that those signs were there," said Richlandtown Asst. Fire Chief Calvin Trovinger. "Seeing a car in a garage, you think you're dealing with carbon monoxide, but what happened today is totally different.

Richland police Sgt. Rich Ficco said the officers were "exposed for about 10 to 15 seconds" before leaving the garage and calling the Bucks County Hazardous Incident Response Team (HIRT).

Trovinger said the Hazmat team contained the situation and then moved the car outside the garage and to ventilate it.

Ficco said that the victim opened a container of the toxic mixture in the car releasing the lethal fumes.

“We’ve discovered that the ingredients for the concoction can be found on the Internet,” said the sergeant. “These types of suicides started in California and are making their way East.”

According to one Internet site, mixing basic household chemicals can create a cloud of hydrogen sulfide gas that is highly toxic.

Deaths from the toxic mixture have been called “detergent suicides.”

A threat assessment Web Site reported that at least 500 Japanese men, women and children took their lives in the first half of 2008 by following instructions posted on the Internet for a lethal concoction using pesticides, toilet bowl cleaners or other chemicals found in the home. In August 2008, a 23-year-old California man was found dead in his car behind a Pasadena shopping center. The car’s doors were locked, the windows rolled up and a sign warning of the toxic gas was placed in the window. It was believed to be the first detergent suicide in the United States.

On Sunday, a sheriff’s deputy in Granville County, N.C. was hospitalized after breathing fumes from a substance found in the vehicle of a 35-year-old woman who committed suicide in Oxford, N.C. A Charlotte TV station said that authorities were calling it a detergent suicide.

The deputy was treated for a throat ailment and released from hospital, the TV station reported.

Upper Bucks firefighters recently discussed dealing with hazardous materials that release such toxic gases like hydrogen sulfide, according to Trovinger.

“It’s something that’s new and we’re looking at it,” he said.

Richland police are expected to release more details today from Cherry Road death.

Source:

[http://www.phillyburbs.com/news/news\\_details/article/92/2010/march/17/detergent-suicide-raises-concern-in-richland.html](http://www.phillyburbs.com/news/news_details/article/92/2010/march/17/detergent-suicide-raises-concern-in-richland.html)

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## **Police: No Officers Harmed in Gas Incident**

WPVI-TV Philadelphia, PA

March 17, 2010

RICHLAND TWP., Pa. – Officials now say no police officers were harmed in an incident involving poison gas in Bucks County.

It happened in the 800 block of E. Cherry Road in Richland Township.

It all began shortly before 11:00 a.m. when someone called reporting a man locked in a garage attempting to commit suicide with hydrogen sulfide.

While it was initially feared that two officers were hurt, Action News has learned there were no injuries to police in this incident.

Source: <http://abclocal.go.com/wpvi/story?section=news/local&id=7335260>