

MEMORANDUM

TO: EMS District Officials and the VT EMS Community

FROM: Dan Manz, Director

RE: Scene Safety

DATE: March 9, 2009

We have seen a few reports of intentional chemical mixing in enclosed spaces such as vehicles or closed rooms as a means of committing suicide. We aren't sure if this represents any sort of trend, but we wanted to make you aware of the potential for harm and remind EMS personnel to use good safety practices. Attached is a link to the Virginia EMS website that describes some of these incidents: <http://www.vaemsnews.com/tag/bonide/>

- The combination of common chemicals involved may represent a hazard to emergency responders from respiratory and explosive potentials.
- We bring this to the attention of VT EMS personnel as a precaution, particularly if you encounter closed space emergencies. It is important to consider the potential for these calls as a hazardous materials incident and assure an appropriate response with qualified personnel. Please refer to the VT Hazardous Materials Protocol in the VT EMS Statewide Protocols.
- Specific signs of concern may include:
 - A patient in an enclosed environment
 - An unusual odor
 - The possibility of visible gas
 - A warning sign or suicide note in close proximity to the patient
 - Obvious chemical containers
 - An environment that appears to have been altered to contain a gas; e.g. tape around windows and doors
- This message is to encourage all EMS personnel to be attentive to safety during scene size up and initial access to a patient. These same precautions apply to possible meth lab responses or other hazardous scenes.