



Fertilizer Safety & Security Council

Conseil de la sécurité en fertilisation

FINAL

POSITION PAPER

ANHYDROUS AMMONIA THEFT FOR METHAMPHETAMINE PRODUCTION

ISSUE

Anhydrous ammonia is a low cost, highly effective nitrogen based fertilizer that farmers across Canada have been using for years to grow food. Increasingly there is a problem, however, involving theft of anhydrous ammonia fertilizer for production of the illegal drug, methamphetamine.

Methamphetamine (meth) is a powerful central nervous system stimulant. A synthetic drug, meth has a high potential for abuse and dependence.

Anhydrous ammonia is one of the materials required to manufacture meth. The common method for small scale illegal production also requires materials obtained from commonly available cold medicines and commercial batteries. Ammonia used for agricultural purposes can also be a source for illegal meth production. Clandestine drug makers obtain the small amounts of ammonia needed by draining it from nurse tanks used by fertilizer dealers to deliver the product to the farm. When all the necessary materials are brought together to manufacture meth, the result is an illegal mixture that poses a serious threat to human health and the environment.

INDUSTRY POSITION

The Fertilizer Safety and Security (FSSC) is concerned that theft of anhydrous ammonia fertilizer for production of the illegal drug methamphetamine has reached alarming proportions in the last few years. It is unacceptable that our product - which is intended to be used to grow food – is being used for an illegal and destructive purpose.

We recognize the potential hazards of mishandling and misuse of ammonia, and that is why we continue to work with law enforcement, all levels of government and our members to improve our programs for its safe and secure manufacturing, handling and distribution.

INDUSTRY ACTION

Creation of the Fertilizer Safety and Security Council (FSSC)

The FSSC is an industry-led initiative launched in 2003 under the leadership of the Canadian Fertilizer Institute to promote the safe and secure manufacturing, handling, storage, transportation and application of commercial fertilizer products. One of the issues that the FSSC examines includes risk due to criminal misuse of fertilizer products, including the illegal use of anhydrous ammonia for meth production.

Comprised of fertilizer manufacturers, distributors and agri-retailers, the FSSC consults extensively with government on policy direction and regulatory issues.

Ammonia Code of Practice and the New Ammonia Safety Program

Currently, the FSSC is finalizing an industry code of practice for the production, distribution, and use of ammonia. The code of practice, which was drafted in June 2006, is available on the FSSC's website for industry review at <http://www.fssc.ca>. Security provisions in the code include the safe and secure handling and storage of ammonia to minimize the risk of theft. The code also covers requirements for storage tank and transportation vessels, equipment, employee knowledge, emergency response preparedness.

Safety and Training

The FSSC has been taking measures to ensure that farmers and fertilizer dealers are fully aware of the threat of theft, how to recognize when a theft has occurred, and who to contact in the case of theft. In 2005, for example, FSSC, in cooperation with the Canadian Association of Agri-Retailers, produced a new farmer training video which included information on how to minimize the risk of unauthorized access to anhydrous ammonia. By raising awareness we can provide another layer of deterrence.

Research

Industry, government agencies, and universities are collaborating in research efforts on additives for anhydrous ammonia which would render it ineffective for the production of methamphetamine. FSSC supports these research efforts.

Working in Partnership

Since 1998, FSSC has been active in The Fertilizer Industry Task Force, which represents the producers, distributors and retailers of anhydrous ammonia in North America. The task force works with federal and local law enforcement agencies as well as researchers and industry professionals in an effort to deter the theft of anhydrous ammonia for the production of meth.

Ongoing initiatives to deter theft include: security fencing; security lighting; tagging and locking nurse tank valves; removing all hoses when unattended; meetings with local drug enforcement authorities and with officials at all levels of government; employee training; and, public education. FSSC further supports efforts to limit access to other ingredients used in illegal meth production.

Through the Fertilizer Safety and Security Council, the industry will continue to work with law enforcement and government agencies in reducing the risk of criminal misuse of fertilizer products.