

Safeguard Your Supply of Anhydrous Ammonia

Help prevent crystal meth production in Manitoba



What is crystal meth?

Crystal meth (*crystal methamphetamine*) is a dangerous, highly addictive drug. Users swallow, inhale, smoke or inject it. It's cheap and widely available. Crystal meth causes physical and mental damage including:

- structural damage to the brain
- damage to the heart
- rotting teeth
- extreme fever and convulsions
- bone erosion
- poor sexual function
- panic attacks
- terrifying hallucinations

How does it affect farm communities?

Anhydrous ammonia fertilizer, used by farmers, is a key ingredient in one of several formulas for making crystal meth. It is very expensive on the black market and theft of this chemical from farms and fertilizer dealerships is on the rise in Western Canada and the Midwestern U.S.

Drug dealers only need small amounts of anhydrous ammonia to make crystal meth. Unsecured or unattended farm supplies are an easy target for such dealers. Thieves try to find unsecured nurse tanks and storage facilities where they can bleed off anhydrous ammonia into empty barbecue propane tanks or other storage devices.

Crystal meth can be quickly and easily manufactured in small laboratories using chemicals from various consumer products, including cold medicines, drain cleaners, battery acid and matches. Illegal laboratories can be as small as a suitcase.



Farmers and fertilizer dealers need to be aware of the potential safety and environmental dangers of ammonia theft for crystal meth production in their communities and help protect anhydrous ammonia supplies.

How to help safeguard your anhydrous ammonia supplies

- Position tanks in secluded areas, out of sight from roads, to discourage accidental discovery by thieves.
- Make sure tanks are delivered as close to the time of application as possible to shorten the time they are left unattended in the fields.
- Bleed and remove hoses at the end of each day to remove excess liquid and to prevent collection of any spillage from the hoses.
- Check tanks at night and in the morning for signs of tampering. Note any changes to the level of anhydrous ammonia.
- Return tanks to the dealer immediately after use.
- Use brightly coloured plastic wire ties or seals between the valve wheel and roll cage to help with quick visual checks. If the tie or seal has been broken, it has likely been tampered with. Alternatively, plastic valve covers could also be secured with ties and visually checked to see if they are broken.
- Keep the bung plug on the bottom of the tank painted so that you can notice any fresh wrench marks on it while you approach the tank.
- Consider installing motion detector lights or alarms and no trespassing signs on your property.



Plastic valve covers and ties offer a quick visual clue to tampering.



Discarded barbecue propane tanks may be a sign of attempted theft or tampering.

- Block road lanes or entrances near the tank with a gate or barricade.
- Inspect and record the condition of nurse tanks upon delivery, after use and when you return them to the fertilizer dealer.
- If there will be a delay in using all of the anhydrous ammonia in the tank, consider returning unused portions to the fertilizer dealer and ordering a different tank when starting up again.
- Contact the RCMP to report any unfamiliar people asking to buy anhydrous ammonia from you or any unfamiliar people hanging around your farm. Provide the police with physical descriptions of suspicious people and their vehicles if you can.

Signs of theft

Some of the most common signs of anhydrous ammonia theft include:

- partially opened tank valves and/or leaking tanks
- vehicle tracks or footprints in the mud or snow
- disturbed ground near tanks
- a circular pattern left in the mud or snow near the tank, where barbecue propane tanks may have been set to fill from your supply
- items left behind after the theft may include buckets, coolers, duct tape, garden hoses, bicycle inner tubes and barbecue propane tanks

How to Respond

If you suspect that your anhydrous ammonia tanks have been tampered with, it is important to respond quickly and safely.

- Leave the area undisturbed and keep others away from it.
- If you suspect the tank has been tampered with, immediately contact the fertilizer dealer to confirm the amount delivered and if any of the suspicious items found were left by the delivery staff.
- If you suspect a theft has occurred, contact the RCMP next.
- If a gas leak is suspected, notify Manitoba Conservation's Emergency Response Line at 204-944-4888 and your local fertilizer dealer who can activate its emergency response plan.
- Stay away from any suspicious people to avoid confronting thieves who may become violent.
- Approach the tank from an upwind position.
- Avoid accidental physical contact or inhalation of anhydrous ammonia from malfunctioning valves and spilled or leaking materials. Anhydrous ammonia can cause chemical burns to the body and lungs.
- Do not store tanks and toolbars inside buildings, in livestock containment areas or near the farm house, as a gas leak would be toxic to people and animals.
- Avoid handling any empty storage containers that may have been used by the thieves, such as barbecue propane tanks. One sign that anhydrous ammonia might be stored in the container is blue or green coloured valves, or tanks with frost on them. The copper or galvanized valve fitting may be affected.

A key goal of this program is to promote cooperation between farmers, agri-retailers, law enforcement and government to prevent the illegal use of legitimate products.