SMUD Safety Alert

Environmental, Health & Safety Services

June 23, 2008

ANHYDROUS AMMONIA AND PROPANE CYLINDERS WARNING

For those of you who like to grill it up during the summer, here's a safety announcement you should be aware of. For those of you who exchange your propane tanks, this is something you definitely need to be aware of, especially in light of the recent news of 'Meth-labs' in our area. Meth cooks are getting propane tanks from places that exchange them. (Hardware stores, grocery stores, etc.) They empty them of the propane, then filling them with anhydrous ammonia. After they are finished with them, they return them to the exchange location. They are then refilled with propane and available for purchase or exchange. Anhydrous ammonia is very corrosive and weakens the structure of the tank. It can be very dangerous when mixed with propane and hooked up to our grills, etc. You should inspect the propane tank for any blue or greenish residue around the valve areas. If it is present, refuse to purchase that tank.

The following comes from the National Propane Gas Association (NPGA) Safety Alert.

“It has come to the attention of the NPGA that propane cylinders are being used in the manufacturing of **Methamphetamines**. This drug is commonly referred to as 'crank'. Manufacturers of this illegal substance are using propane cylinders for the storage and the use of anhydrous ammonia. These cylinders have been found in many states at cylinder exchange and refilling locations as well as in hotel rooms and mobile laboratories, where the manufacturing of this illegal substance takes place.

As observed in the illustrations, a blue-green stain on any brass portion of a service valve is evidence that it may have been in contact with anhydrous ammonia. The pungent odor of ammonia on or near the cylinder is also an indication. If you suspect that a propane cylinder contains or has contained anhydrous ammonia, exercise extreme caution and restrict access to the area.

It can be dangerous to move the cylinder due to the unknown integrity of the cylinder's service valve. If you determine that it must be moved, keep in mind that hazards due to valve expulsion can be reduced by pointing the end of the container in which the valve is placed away from yourself and others and towards the safest direction.”

CAUTION!

The brass valve in a propane cylinder will be damaged if it comes in contact with anhydrous ammonia. This deterioration will lead to cracking of the valve body or its components and can ultimately result in a violent, unexpected expulsion of the valve from the cylinder, causing personal injury or death.

For more information, please refer to http://www.npga.org

Please review this Safety Bulletin in your safety meetings and post on your SIRC/Safety bulletin board.