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**Sheriff's Office keeps a close watch on possible theft at derailment site**

Sheriff Alice Tompkins and Dane County police are remaining vigilant of the possible attempted theft of anhydrous ammonia from the site of the recent derailment and chemical spill.

Officers have revisited the site of the derailment, which has been highly guarded in the wake of the spill, and have found that it appears someone may have tried to gain access to the ammonia.

While police have not found anyone at the scene, Sheriff Tompkins and Dane County officials are moving quickly to identify fingerprints on items left behind, and prevent further spills from occurring.

The Dane County Sheriff's office is also investigating the possible association with potential theft and possible meth production after items were left at the scene, though nothing on the subject has been confirmed.

According to Sheriff Tompkins, the Dane County Sheriff's Office will be "stepping up patrols of the crash site," emphasizing that preventing possible meth production and further injuries are a priority at the moment.

Meth does pose a threat to communities as it has a high potential for abuse and dependence, and according to the National Institute of Drug Abuse, it is a stimulant.

“We want to keep our Dane County communities as safe as possible, and we will continue to work tirelessly until that goal is reached.” stated Sheriff Tompkins.

The manufacturer of the tankers is also proposing an alternate method to drain the remaining chemical, as to prevent a possible public safety risk from simply opening them.

This plan is currently in its final stages of preparation before it is in place within the upcoming week, and draining the remaining chemicals will allow nearby residents to be back in their homes and businesses.

Anhydrous ammonia, aside from its potential association with the production of meth, also poses a threat with mere exposure.

According to the University of Wisconsin-Extension, exposure to the chemical on human skin and eyes can cause “severe burns” and “rapid dehydration.”

The University of Wisconsin-Extension also shared that anhydrous ammonia “even at diluted concentrations is highly toxic to aquatic animals.” leading it to be classified as “dangerous for the environment” by the Environmental Protection Agency.

The items found at the scene, which include duct tape, part of a garden hose and a cooler are also commonly found on farms and fertilizer dealerships when people steal anhydrous ammonia for meth production.

Due to this association, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection has provided farmers and fertilizer dealers with a pamphlet detailing steps to prevent and deter anhydrous ammonia theft.

Tompkins also wants to emphasize information provided at the end of the pamphlet, stating that raising awareness and taking common-sense steps can really help to deter theft.

If there is any information on the spill that people wish to share, there is no tip that is too small when it comes to protecting the Dane County Community. Please contact Reginald McBrush at 608-555-5555 with any more information.

