



For Immediate Release

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**MADIGAN URGES FARMERS TO SAFEGUARD ANHYDROUS
SUPPLIES DURING HARVEST SEASON**

***KEY FERTILIZER HIJACKED BY METH "COOKS" TO MAKE DEADLY
DRUG***

Springfield – Amid unsettling statistics that methamphetamine is the fastest-growing drug in the United States and poses enormous threats to rural communities throughout Illinois, Attorney General Lisa Madigan today reminded farmers and chemical dealers that Fall is prime time for thieves looking to steal a key ingredient used in “cooking” methamphetamine: anhydrous ammonia.

Anhydrous ammonia, a chemical used in field preparation, is now a staple in the manufacture of methamphetamine. With the harvest season and field preparation continuing through November, anhydrous tanks that dot the Illinois prairie are easily accessible and make tempting targets for meth producers.

“Farmers are hard at work bringing in the crop this time of year,” Madigan said. “Unfortunately, they are now forced to keep one eye on the weather and the other on their anhydrous supplies.”

Madigan urged farmers and chemical dealers to take the following steps to help prevent theft of anhydrous ammonia:

- Deliver nurse tanks to the field as close as possible to the day of application and have them returned immediately after use.
- Inspect the tanks daily for signs of theft or tampering. Most thefts occur at night and over the weekend. Use brightly colored plastic ties or wire seals on the valves to assist you in determining if tampering has occurred.
- Remove hoses and store them separately from the tanks. There is typically enough ammonia in a standard decoupling hose to make meth.
- Work with local law enforcement to enhance security procedures including placement of and delivery of tanks and encourage nighttime and weekend patrols.

- Most important, **DO NOT** approach or confront suspicious individuals. These people are very likely to be under the influence of meth and can be dangerously violent. Call the authorities immediately.

Madigan encouraged fertilizer dealers and farmers to participate in a new \$1.6 million grant program administered by the Illinois Department of Agriculture with the aim of improving safety and security at anhydrous ammonia facilities. Information on the program is available at www.agr.state.il.us or at www.ifca.com.

Madigan also reminded the agricultural community about two new laws drafted by her office to better protect communities from methamphetamine:

- The Methamphetamine Control and Community Protection Act, which took effect September 11, 2005, consolidates and strengthens criminal laws against meth production, distribution and use and, as a result, gives prosecutors additional tools to go after meth makers who tamper with anhydrous tanks. The Act creates two new offenses: possession of anhydrous ammonia with intent to manufacture meth, and **aggravated** possession of anhydrous ammonia with intent to manufacture meth. The Act also increases penalties for possession of anhydrous in an unauthorized container and tampering with anhydrous ammonia equipment, raising these offenses from Class 4 to Class 3 felonies.
- The Methamphetamine Precursor Control Act imposes stricter controls on the display and sale of meth's key ingredient, pseudoephedrine. Since the law took effect on January 15 of this year, the number and size of meth labs in Illinois have decreased. This law also has resulted in a dramatic reduction in the flow of out-of-state meth-makers coming to Illinois to purchase pseudoephedrine and other meth ingredients.

"My office will continue to explore initiatives to help protect farmers and citizens against meth-related incidents," Madigan said. "Additionally, my office will continue to prosecute and assist state's attorneys in prosecuting meth makers and dealers."

More information about meth legislation and issues can be found at the "MethNet" link at Madigan's Web site: www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov. The pamphlet, Methamphetamine and Agriculture, also can be downloaded at the Attorney General's Web site at http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/consumers/brochures/methag_0505.pdf

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