



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

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Two state agencies working to remove hazardous material, find guilty party

The Louisiana departments of Environmental Quality and Agriculture and Forestry are working together to remove more than 20 cylinders that either contain or did contain methyl bromide, a highly toxic gas often used as a fumigant, from an area just south of Lake Charles.

The cylinders were reported to DEQ by a concerned citizen who accidentally found them while riding his motorcycle in a remote area near Belle City. The agencies investigated and secured the area. Information on the cylinders indicates some of the cylinders contain methyl bromide, a colorless, odorless gas that is used to control rodents, insects and weeds.

Once the site was secured, the agencies worked together to find a place where the cylinders and chemicals could be taken care of properly. Once the hazardous material is removed, which is anticipated to be completed by June 30, DEQ plans to ramp up its efforts to locate and arrest the person or persons responsible for dumping the material.

“Even though this is a rural area, this chemical has the potential to be extremely dangerous,” said DEQ Criminal Investigations Manager Peter Ricca. “There have been several cases of death that were directly related to mishandling methyl bromide. We are working with the companies that manufacture this material to try and trace the cylinders back to the person who dumped them.”

Ricca said DEQ is also asking that anyone with any knowledge of the illegal dumping to call 225-219-3944 or toll free at 866-896-5337. The person or persons who dumped the cylinders could be charged with illegal disposal of hazardous waste and face a fine of up to \$250,000, 15 years in prison or both.

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