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Environmental News

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

(Kansas City, Kan., Aug. 9, 2011) - EPA has awarded the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) $30,000 to assist with outreach, education and implementation of the Clean Air Act's Risk Management Program. All fertilizer facilities that handle, process or store more than 10,000 pounds of anhydrous ammonia are subject to EPA's chemical safety requirements. There are approximately 700 agricultural retail anhydrous ammonia facilities in Iowa.

"This grant is designed to prevent releases and protect the health and safety of area residents, and enhance communications with local emergency responders and regulated facilities," said Karl Brooks, regional administrator. "IDALS is receiving this funding to conduct on-site audits, workshops and follow-up safety assessments at agricultural retail anhydrous ammonia facilities in Iowa."

Anhydrous ammonia is generally safe provided handling, storage and maintenance procedures are followed. However, it is toxic and can be a health hazard. Inhaling anhydrous ammonia can cause lung irritation and severe respiratory injuries.

EPA Region 7 receives more accidental release reports for ammonia than for any other chemical. In addition to releases caused by transportation accidents, human error and equipment failure, a number of releases have been caused by anhydrous ammonia thefts. Anhydrous ammonia is a key ingredient in the illegal production of methamphetamine. When stolen, the toxic gas can be unintentionally released, causing injuries to emergency responders, law enforcement personnel, the public and the criminals themselves.

Retailers were first required to be in compliance with the Risk Management Program in 1999. EPA then started facility inspections and enforcement of the program, which includes five components: hazard assessment system, management, accident prevention, emergency response and submittal of a risk management plan.

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