

United States Attorney's Office - Southern District of West Virginia

News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 3, 2008

In matters prosecuted by the US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of West Virginia:

KANAWHA MAN SENTENCED TO PRISON FOR STEALING ANHYDROUS AMMONIA FOR METHAMPHETAMINE PRODUCTION

CHARLESTON, WV – **MICHAEL JOE CLARK, 36, of Shrewsbury, WV**, was sentenced today by United States District Judge John T. Copenhaver, Jr. to 37 months in prison for stealing anhydrous ammonia and negligently causing the dangerous chemical to be released into the air. **CLARK** previously pled guilty to the charge in May 2008.

The conviction stems from an incident on February 27, 2008. **CLARK**, with the assistance of another individual, entered the Penn Virginia Resources property near Chelyan, WV, with the intent to steal anhydrous ammonia from a 1,000 gallon tank located on the property. **CLARK** planned to use the chemical to manufacture methamphetamine. While stealing the ammonia, **CLARK** caused a release of the chemical which burned his hand and injured his lungs, resulting in hospitalization. The chemical release also resulted in a voluntary shelter-in-place for the adjacent residents. Anhydrous ammonia is an extremely hazardous substance and exposure to the chemical can result in serious bodily injury or death. In addition to **CLARK**, medical attention was required at the site for several of the emergency personnel who responded to the incident.

"Anhydrous ammonia is toxic and can cause severe respiratory problems," said David Dillon, Special Agent in Charge for EPA'S Criminal Investigation Division in Philadelphia. "Anyone who tries to steal it risks injuring emergency responders, such as firemen and police, as well as themselves, and they will be prosecuted."

In addition to his term of imprisonment, **CLARK** must also pay \$8,816.48 in restitution. Special Assistant United States Attorney Perry D. McDaniel handled the prosecution. The US Environmental Protection Agency, Criminal Investigation Division, conducted the investigation.

[Back to Previous](#)