DEPUTIES RECEIVE ACID BURNS WHILE SUBDUING ASSAULT SUSPECT – SOAP LAKE AREA

SOAP LAKE, Wash. (05AUGUST2011) – Two Grant County Sheriff’s Deputies received chemical burns last night after a domestic violence suspect used muriatic acid to assault the deputies.

Around 6:40 p.m., Colleen Wedge, 363 County Road 18.2-NE, rural Soap Lake, called 9-1-1 reporting her son, Todd Wedge, 38, had assaulted her by striking her in the back with a drinking glass. During the phone call, 9-1-1 dispatchers could hear Todd in the background threatening to assault law enforcement officers.

A Soap Lake Police Officer arrived at the home first and discovered Todd Wedge had barricaded himself in a shed behind the home. Grant County Sheriff’s Deputies Greg Hutchison and Gary Mansford and an Ephrata Police Officer arrived and approached the shed to make contact with Todd Wedge. Wedge then began ingesting household chemicals from inside the shed, including windshield washer fluid, carburetor cleaner, and muriatic acid. Wedge also sprayed the highly-flammable carburetor cleaner all over himself in an attempt to dissuade officers from using a Taser to subdue him.

Deputies used pepper spray to incapacitate Wedge, but he was able to grab the jug of muriatic acid and splash it onto officers who were trying to subdue him. Wedge was ultimately handcuffed and arrested.

Deputies Hutchison and Mansford received burns to the face and various other places on their bodies. They were transported to Samaritan Hospital where they were treated and released.

Todd Wedge was transported to Columbia Basin Hospital, where he was treated and released. He was then booked into the Grant County Jail on suspicion of assault/domestic violence and assault upon law enforcement officers.

Colleen Wedge declined medical treatment. The Soap Lake and Ephrata officers were not injured.

Muriatic acid is similar to hydrochloric acid and is used to clean such things as outdoor pavement. Muriatic acid is extremely corrosive and highly caustic.

“Deputy Hutchison was wearing eyeglasses, and his glasses stopped the acid from going right into his eyes,” said Sheriff Tom Jones. “This incident highlights some of the hazards our law enforcement officers face every day, and I’m very grateful none of the officers involved received more serious injuries.”

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