

New technology exposes potential chemical hazard in PSM

Published Date: 23 September 2008

By [FERGUS McEWAN](#)

NEW technology exposed a potential chemical hazard in Port St Mary as a false alarm in minutes.

A section of the footpath in the outer harbour was cordoned off on Tuesday after a walker noticed luminous liquid leaking from an unmarked blue container which appeared to have been washed ashore.

Until now, the area could have remained closed for hours while samples were taken to the public analyst's laboratory for testing.

But members of the fire and rescue service's bio-hazard response team scanned the liquid at the scene using a portable Ahura First Defender, which identified it as antifreeze within two minutes.

Fire and Rescue Service assistant divisional officer John Murtagh said the USA-made kit had been a success on its first use in the Isle of Man.

Although the tub was sent for a final test, Mr Murtagh said he was confident the First Defender had found a positive match between the liquid and ethylene glycol, the chemical name for antifreeze.

He said the kit would dramatically speed up responses to spills, as the service had specific clean-up procedures for different chemicals which could be started as soon as they had been identified.

Within minutes of removing the container, the biohazard team began hosing down the rocks where it was first spotted and the footpath it was moved to before the emergency services arrived.

Mr Murtagh advised members of the public who find leaking containers not to pick them up, as they could injure or contaminate themselves or others.

Reporter Fergus McEwan was on the scene and spoke to police and fire personnel about the emergency procedure



CHEMICAL SCARE: Emergency service personnel take the container from the rocks (MIKE WADE)