

Gilmanton seeks dumpers of leaky

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home heating fuel tank

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GILMANTON — Local authorities asking the public's help in finding whoever dumped a leaking 275-gallon home heating fuel tank in a culvert on South Road.

Responding to a report about the tank on April 6, police found it was actually in a stream alongside the road and was leaking a mixture of kerosene and home heating oil. They contacted the New Hampshire Division of Environmental Services to help the Gilmanton Fire Department in the remedying of this potentially dangerous

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Fire Chief Jim Clough

spill.

"The Division of Environmental Services has an emergency response plan that was activated to make them aware of the situa-

tion. The activation also allows the town to work with and hire environmental clean-up companies to deal with the problem," explained Gilmanton Fire Chief Jim Clough.

Once the DES assessed to the nature of the spill and the proper method of cleaning the mess, the Fire Department contacted Lakes Region Environmental Contractors and Clean Harbors to aid in the process.

"When we found the tank it was lying in the stream with its leak facing down allowing the damaged container to spill the fuel. Once we secured the tank, we cut it open

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Police Chief William Robarge

and found approximately 12 to 15 gallons of product remaining," Clough said in detailing the clean-up procedure that was car-

ried out by the Fire Department and the two private agencies.

"Most of the surface contamination seems to have been contained by leaves and other things though we put absorbent pads in the water to suck up the remaining oil," Clough continued. "The pads will stay in place until Friday when soil testing will be done. We think that the extremely hot weather helped by causing much of the contaminants to dissipate into the air and we feel we caught the problem before it

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could have become much worse."

Although the spill appears to have been taken care of safely and without incident, the chief is concerned about the irresponsibility of the people who left the tank in the stream and the cost to the town.

"This really could have been prevented," the chief said. "I don't think the act was malicious, though it resulted in 30 hours of involvement and clean-up. People don't understand the impacts and hazards that go along with something like this. The physical clean-up alone will cost three to five thou-

sand dollars, and that's not including all of the time we have put into investigating the matter."

Clough went on to explain the consequences if the spill had been more serious.

"A larger release would involve the drilling of monitoring wells and could take three years to control. We would possibly have to call in the Hazardous Materials Team (HAZMAT) with the possibility of having to remove soil and incinerate the contaminated material this could cost hundreds of thousands of dollars."

Unfortunately for the town, disposing of hazardous waste in this manner is relatively easy to do.

"It's a pretty secluded road and it was probably easy to do. It looks like they just heaved it off the side of the road," Gilmanton Chief of Police William Robarge said.

When asked what would motivate someone to do something like this, Chief Robarge gave two possibilities.

"They don't want to have to pay to take it away and they don't want to have to go through what they think is a hassle to bring it to a disposing facility."

As of yet no suspects in the dumping of the tank have been identified. However, the Gilmanton Police Department remains intent on finding the culprit or culprits hoping that the situation affords the community the chance to work with the department in settling the problem.

"The department will not tolerate this, and we will do the best we possibly can to find out who is responsible. This is a good opportunity for the community to work together and deter this type of hazardous activity before it continues," said Robarge.

Although the spill seems to have been taken care of, the Gilmanton Police and Fire Departments would appreciate any information that could lead to finding those responsible. They ask that anyone with information on the case call the Gilmanton Police Department at 364-7400 or the Greater Laconia Crime Line at 524-1717.