

IS THERE A METH LAB IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

Methamphetamine is the #1 drug of choice in Spokane. This information disseminated by Spokane Regional Health District, Environmental Health Division, will help you recognize the signs of a meth-making operation in your neighborhood.

There are three common methods used to produce meth. These processes use a variety of chemicals, including explosives, solvents, metals, salts and corrosives. The cooking and/or the combination of these products can create vapors and spillage which can be toxic.

ABOUT METHAMPHETAMINE

There is an alarming increase in the production and use of methamphetamine (meth) in the Spokane area. The community needs to be educated to the signs of both the meth production process and the hazards that are encountered.

What is Meth: Meth is a powerful, highly toxic, addictive drug that is illegally "cooked" in makeshift labs. Meth can be found in the form of pills, capsules, powder or chunks; it can be smoked, snorted, injected or eaten. Meth was developed from amphetamine, but has much stronger effects on the central nervous system. Meth is also called crank, speed, crystal or ice.

The warning signs of living near a lab:

- Strong odor of solvents, acids or ammonia
- Residences with windows blacked out
- Iodine, or chemical stained bathroom or kitchen fixtures
- Increased activity, especially at night
- Excessive trash

COMMON METH LAB SUPPLIES

The most common chemicals used to start the meth making process are over-the-counter cold and asthma medications such as Sudafed, Revive, and Mini-thins, which contain ephedrine or pseudoephedrine as decongestants, stimulants or diet pills.

There are many chemical names for the ingredients in a meth production process. However, many of these chemicals are better known by product type or brand names. Some of the following are chemical names, product types, brand names which in some combination, will be found in meth labs such as:

- Bottles with plastic tubing
- Mason jars and glassware
- Propane tanks (sometimes with bent or tampered valves and blue-green corrosion)
- Camp stove fuel
- Empty cans of toluene, alcohol or paint thinner

- Ammonia
- Starter fluid (Heet)
- Sodium hydroxide (Red Devil Lye)
- Coffee filters with red stains
- Funnels
- Rock salt, iodine bottles
- Lithium batteries – broken open
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Dozens of torn match books
- Muriatic acid

IF YOU SUSPECT A METH LAB...

Do not enter a site that you think may be used for cooking meth. Labs present extreme dangers from explosions and exposure to hazardous chemicals. Breathing the vapors and handling substances can cause serious injury. Drug labs are considered hazardous waste sites and should only be entered by trained and equipped professionals.

Never handle materials you suspect were used for making meth, such as contaminated glassware, needles and trash. Skin contact can result in burns or poisoning. Handling items can also cause some of the chemicals to explode or catch fire. Consider that when professionals respond to a drug lab, they do not enter the building until they have put on protective, chemically resistant suits and boots, special gloves and respirators.

HEALTH RISKS

Meth use can cause serious health problems including central nervous system (brain) damage, cardiovascular (heart) damage seizures and strokes. Meth use is responsible for birth defects and miscarriages.

Meth use raises body temperature, causes skin sores, tooth decay and hair loss.

It also causes severe depression, paranoia, and aggressive and violent behavior. Meth is a suspected cancer causing substance.

Meth causes health problems not just for the users, but also for others who are unintentionally exposed to the chemicals.

People who enter a drug lab before it has been properly cleaned and ventilated may feel headaches, nausea, dizziness and fatigue, shortness of breath eye and throat irritation and chest pain. These symptoms usually go away after several hours.

For further information on the health effects of meth, or for a list of certified Clandestine Drug Clean-up Contractors, contact: Spokane Regional Health District ... (509) 324-1560; Fax (509) 324-3603; www.spokanecounty.org/health or Washington State Dept. of Health ... (360) 236-3381