

The manufacture of methamphetamine, (“meth”) in clandestine labs is a growing concern throughout the country. Each year more of these labs are found. These labs are costly and dangerous to the people who find them, who live in the home, and to the professionals who clean up the toxic waste by-products. For every pound of meth produced, five to six pounds of toxic waste is generated. This waste must be cleaned and disposed of in a safe manner by qualified personnel.

What is Methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine is one of the most powerful central nervous system stimulants known. It has other names, such as “meth,” “crank,” “speed” or “ice.” Meth is highly addictive; after just one use, a user can become addicted. Meth comes in many forms – pills, capsules, powder, or chunks. It can be smoked, inhaled, snorted, injected or eaten.

What does meth do to people who take it?

The effects of meth are similar to those of cocaine. It gives the user a “rush” or intense feeling of pleasure when taken. Meth is a popular drug because the effects last longer than cocaine and is fairly easy to make.

Meth causes the user to experience periods of high energy, rapid speech and breathing, increased body temperature and increased blood pressure. Chronic users also experience severe depression, paranoia (delusions, hallucinations and violent behavior), insomnia, tremors and loss of appetite.

How is meth made?

Meth is made with common household appliances, glassware and readily available chemicals. There are several methods used to make meth, and the dangers involved vary according to the method used. All of the methods use a variety of chemicals: solvents, metals, salts and corrosives (acids). During the manufacturing process (“cooking”), many additional compounds and by-products are made. The fumes, vapors and spillage associated with cooking can be toxic and are also considered hazardous waste.



Where do meth labs occur?

Almost any property can be used as a meth lab. Some of the more popular sites are: rental properties, motel rooms, storage units, vacant buildings, campgrounds, and out buildings in rural areas. A meth lab can easily be transported in the trunk of a car, which makes it portable to almost any location. In order to avoid detection by law enforcement, labs are often set up to produce one batch of meth, then dismantled and moved to another site.

Why are these labs a problem?

The process of making meth is highly flammable. The chemicals and equipment can explode and injure or kill the “cook” as well as other occupants of the building. When labs are abandoned, the potentially explosive and toxic chemicals are left behind. The chemicals can harm the future occupants of the building who come into contact with them by inhalation or skin contact. The makers of meth often try to hide their activities by discarding the materials wherever possible. Chemicals are often disposed in ditches, ponds, or other places where they cannot be seen. These chemicals create problems for the environment.

How can I tell if I live near a lab?

- Strong odors (ammonia, ether, acetone or other chemicals)
- Residences with windows covered
- Iodine- or chemical-stained bathroom or kitchen fixtures
- Renters who pay their landlords in cash
- Increased activity, especially at night
- Excessive trash



What products are commonly found in meth labs?

- Gasoline, antifreeze
- Plastic tubing
- Mason jars, pyrex glassware
- Propane tanks (sometimes spray-painted or burned, with bent or tampered valves). Bluing of brass fittings is common (see photo)
- Camp stove fuel
- Empty cans of toluene, alcohol or paint thinner
- Ammonia
- Starter fluid
- Scales
- Coffee filters with red stains or white powder on them
- Funnels
- Rock salt
- Iodine
- Lithium batteries
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Large quantities of cold tablets or empty bottles



If I suspect a lab, what should I do?

If you suspect a property is being used as a meth lab, call local law enforcement immediately. Do not attempt to enter the structure as the labs may be unsafe. In addition, the person making meth is often a user and may be dangerous if confronted.

If you suspect a property was once used as a meth lab, contact the local health department. The Benton-Franklin Health District has a list of homes in Benton and Franklin Counties that were used as meth labs and if the property was cleaned up properly. The Washington State Department of Health's website lists the status of known drug labs in Washington (www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/cdl.htm).

Who to Call:

To report a suspected lab:

Local Law Enforcement, Non emergency	
Kennewick and Richland	628-0333
Pasco	545-3510

Concerns about the health effects of meth:

Washington State Department of Health,
360-236-3381

Questions about drug labs or clean up resources:

Benton-Franklin Health District
Environmental Health Division

7102 W. Okanogan Place
Kennewick, WA 99336
(509) 460-4205

Facts About METH LABS

