

IS THERE A METH LAB IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?

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Reasons why you, as a citizen should be concerned about meth labs:

- The chemicals used to make methamphetamine are extremely toxic and even a very short period of exposure to them could be fatal.
- People that run meth labs are typically not very environmentally conscious. They will dump the byproducts of the methamphetamine production process in their backyard, the alley, the garbage, or just out along a city street or county road. This area, once it is discovered, immediately becomes a hazardous materials clean-up site. The potential dangers to both people and animals are very obvious.
- People who run meth labs are not expert chemists. These labs can explode and, even if they don't, the chemical processes involved in making methamphetamine can go awry, producing vapors that can kill a person that breathes in just a couple of breaths in such an environment.
- Methamphetamine is not produced under controlled conditions in well-designed laboratories using top-quality equipment. In fact, it can be produced anywhere, even in an area as small as a closet and sometimes even in a vehicle. Obviously, such areas lack proper ventilation, increasing the chances of having a fatal accident. Hazardous materials are not stored in proper containers, and the production equipment used is often common household containers and cooking equipment, which also increases the potential for catastrophe.
- People that manufacture methamphetamine do not have the best judgment anyway because many are addicted to drugs themselves. They raise their kids in the same home that they manufacture methamphetamine in without any more regard for their family's safety than they have for the safety of the community as a whole.

Here are some things to look for:

- Unusual, strong odors that smell like cat urine, ether, ammonia, acetone, or other chemicals.
- Residences with windows that are blacked out so that nobody can see inside.
- Renters that pay their landlords entirely in cash. Drug dealers trade almost exclusively in cash while most citizens still pay their bills with checks so they do not have to carry large amounts of cash on them.
- Lots of traffic around a residence, particularly involving people coming and going at unusual times. There may be relatively little traffic during the day, but traffic increases dramatically at night. An additional traffic-related indicator is when the visitors stay for a very short time only. Visitors may not even go inside the house, but instead, may walk to a window or a screen door where the exchange is made.
- An excessive amount of trash at the curb, particularly large amounts of items such as antifreeze containers, lantern fuel containers, red chemically stained coffee filters, drain cleaner, and duct tape.
- Corroded, damaged, or misshapen propane tanks, barrels, or other metal containers in or around building.
- A large quantity of clear glass containers being brought into the house.

(Source: Region V Systems, Partners in Prevention online Newsletter, January 2006)