

METHAMPHETAMINES

Methamphetamines affect the entire community. Over the last few years, the Longmont Police Department has recorded an increase in methamphetamine cases.

Methamphetamine trafficking, manufacture and abuse have been on the rise over the past few years. As a result, this drug is having a destructive impact on many communities, including ours.

What is methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine is a stimulant. Nicknames include meth, crank, speed, crystal, STP and others. Until the price of cocaine began dropping, meth was known as “the poor man’s cocaine.” Meth is usually ingested, snorted or injected. A more dangerous form of methamphetamine, “ice”, can be smoked.

While some methamphetamine sold on the street is white, much of it is yellowish, or even brown, is sometimes the consistency of damp powdered sugar and has a strong medicinal smell. It is often sold in tiny “Ziploc” type plastic bags..

Signs of a meth lab

- The smell of chemicals or solvents not usually associated with residential housing coming from house, garage or detached buildings.
- The presence of chemical glassware such as flasks, beakers, rubber tubing and condensers.
- Garbage containing broken flasks, beakers, glass cookware or other chemical paraphernalia.
- An excessive amount of garbage, or garbage set for pick-up in another neighbor’s collection area, or no trash ever set out for pick-up.
- A high volume of pedestrian or vehicular traffic at all times of the day and night, often remaining at a home for only a brief time. Traffic may increase on certain days, during the weekend or late at night.
- Various obvious signs of drug use, such as people exchanging packets for cash, using drugs while sitting in their cars, or syringes or other paraphernalia lying around.
- **Occupants appear unemployed, yet they seem to have plenty of money to pay bills with cash.**
- **Occupants are unfriendly, and/or appear secretive about activities and display paranoid or odd behavior.**
- **Extensive security systems at the home or signs that indicate “PRIVATE PROPERTY” or “BEWARE OF DOG”, fences, large shrubs, bushes and trees and blackened windows or curtains always drawn.**

What every retailer should know

- Learn and watch for the early indicators of possible drug lab activity listed in the previous section.
- Require that each person who purchases suspicious items show a photo ID. Record driver’s license numbers or other identifying data from the documents.
- Visually check and then write down the license plate numbers of customers purchasing suspicious items (*see* page 43 of this *Handbook* for a list of common chemicals and equipment).
- If the indicators are strong enough, consider refusing to sell to the person.
- Call your local law enforcement immediately (9-1-1) if you become convinced that a customer is purchasing items to be used in the illegal manufacture of controlled substances.

What hotel and motel operators should know

This information has been prepared to help you recognize customers who may be purchasing materials for use in the manufacture of illegal substances. As you review the list of chemicals and equipment commonly used in the manufacture of meth, keep in mind that most items have no significance unless seen in large quantities. Besides being illegal, clandestine laboratories are extremely dangerous, with possible risks including explosions, fire, exposure to toxic chemicals and even unintended confrontation with armed meth “cooks.” In addition, the costs can be high – toxic contamination left behind must be cleaned to State of Colorado specifications.

Once the operator has the equipment in place and chemicals collected, it doesn't take long to cook the drugs – more experienced cooks can complete the process for one batch in anywhere from 30 minutes to 5 hours. Clandestine labs have been set up in all manner of living quarters, from motel rooms and RVs to single family rentals or apartment units. In general, lab operators favor seclusion. In rural settings, barns or houses situated well away from other residences may be used. In urban settings, labs are most likely to be situated in houses with trees or shrubs blocking the views or hotel rooms that are well away from the casual view of management.

Additional indicators for hotel and motel operators – to be considered in conjunction with other signs

Early Indicators

- Guests who list a local address at registration yet indicate a desire to stay for many days.
- A willingness to pay for multiple nights in advance, particularly in cash.

Other Indicators

- Refusal of maid service or requests to cancel service for the duration of the visit.
- Removal or covering of smoke detectors.
- Water running in bathrooms or kitchen facilities for long periods of time.
- The odor of ether, chloroform, ammonia or other chemicals not typically associated with a guest's room.
- The presence of bottles or jugs used for secondary purposes, such as milk jugs and screw top beer bottles full of mysterious liquids.
- The presence of hot plates and glass cookware.
- Quantities of small “Ziploc” type plastic bags- the type that jewelry or beads are sometimes kept in.
- Large amounts of cold or diet pills.
- The presence of any obvious evidence, such as bags of white, yellow or brown powder, syringes or other drug paraphernalia.

If you find a meth lab

Leave immediately.

You will not know which chemicals are present, whether or not the place is booby trapped, or how clean the operation is. Don't stay to figure it out! Do not open containers or attempt to smell any item or the contents of any container. Do not turn on, turn off or unplug anything. Do not touch anything!

If you are not sure you have discovered a lab but suspect you may have, don't stay to investigate. Make a mental note of the suspicious details and get out.

Check your health and wash up.

As soon as possible after leaving the building, wash your face and hands and check your physical symptoms. If you have concerns about symptoms you are experiencing, call your doctor, contact the emergency room or call the poison control center for advice.

Even if you feel no adverse physical effects, change your clothes and take a shower as soon as possible. Whether or not you can smell them, the chemical dust and vapors of an active meth lab can cling to your clothing in the same way cigarette smoke does. In most cases, a normal laundering will decontaminate the clothing.

Alert your local police.

Contact the Longmont Police Department at 303.651.8555 or after-hours call 9-1-1. To reach a Special Enforcement Unit officer or for a Confidential Hot Line, call 303.651.8585. These reports often receive priority and are investigated quickly due to the dangers associated with clandestine drug lab activity.

Arrange for a certified cleanup.

If you are a landlord, before you rent the property again you must comply with cleanup requirements. Begin by getting information from the Longmont Police Department or Longmont Fire Department's hazardous materials unit.

Current cleanup laws require the owner of an identified meth lab to:

- Prevent entry by any individual unless they are properly trained and have appropriate personal protective equipment.
- Conduct a preliminary assessment.
- Assure proper cleanup of the property, per regulation.
- Conduct and submit a final report to Boulder County Public Health (the governing body) per C.R.S. §25-18.5-101, Illegal Drug Laboratories.

NOTE: Illegal drug lab activity may contaminate more than the room in which the cooking occurred. Therefore, more than one room may require decontamination before re-rental. For your health, the health of potential renters, and for your rental business, begin the process for decontamination as quickly as possible.

Lab cleanup and the law

The Colorado Revised Statutes do not specifically address property contamination by clandestine drug labs. The law, however, does place restrictions on hotels and motels to ensure that the rooms they rent are not a hazard to the community. Colorado State Health Department regulations and state and county building codes regulate the fitness of occupied dwellings, including hotel and motel rooms.

If the rental is a contaminated lab site, it becomes difficult to sell and unlawful to rent. If you fail to clean up a lab site, new laws allow buyers the potential to void contracts. If you allow guests to stay in a contaminated room, you risk substantial legal liability if a guest suffers consequent health problems.

Depending on the level of contamination present, cleanup may be as simple as a thorough cleaning of all surfaces or as complex as replacing drywall. On rare occasions, demolition of the entire structure is required. Whether the process is simple or complex, you should use a contractor trained and licensed by the Health Department to assure the work is done correctly.



WHAT CAN I DO IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD?

You can protect your family and property by doing a few minor but very helpful things:

- Watch what goes on in your neighborhood
- Meet and get to know your neighbors
- Know if there are any rental properties in the neighborhood and who the landlords are
- If you notice anything suspicious **CALL THE POLICE!**
- You may provide information and remain anonymous

For more information visit:

1. www.cdph.state.co.us/hm/methlab.htm
2. www.ci.longmont.co.us/police/prevention/meth.htm
3. Boulder County Public Health, Environmental Health: 303-441-1566



CHEMICALS AND EQUIPMENT FREQUENTLY FOUND AT METHAMPHETAMINE LAB SITES:

Household Equipment List: Tempered Glass Baking Dishes, Glass Pie Dishes, Glass or Plastic Jugs, Bottles, Measuring Cups, Turkey Basters, Glass Jars, Funnels, Coffee Filters, Blenders, Rubber Tubing, Paper Towels, Rubber Gloves, Gasoline Cans, Plastic Tote Boxes, Plastic Jugs, Tape, Clamps, Hotplates, Strainers, Aluminum Foil, Propane Cylinders (20-lb), Books (meth lab instruction)

Chemical (Source): Ephedrine (cold & allergy medicine), Pseudo ephedrine (cold & allergy medicine), Alcohol (rubbing/gasoline additive), Toluene (brake cleaner), Ether (engine starter), Sulfuric Acid (drain cleaner), Methanol (gasoline additive), Lithium (camera batteries), Trichloroethane (gun scrubber), Anhydrous Ammonia (farm fertilizer), Sodium Hydroxide (lye), Red Phosphorus (matches), Iodine (veterinarian products), Sodium Metal (can be made from lye), MSM (animal product), Table Salt/Rock Salt, Kerosene, Gasoline, Muriatic Acid, Campfire Fuel, Paint Thinner, Acetone