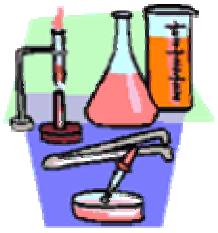
"No one ever tries Meth just once"

Methamphetamines are synthetic amphetamines or stimulants that are produced and sold illegally in pill form, capsules, powder and chunks. An amphetamine is a chemical that has stimulant properties similar to adrenaline. Like adrenaline, methamphetamines stimulate the central nervous system, and are extremely addictive. After the effects of meth wears off, it can cause severe withdrawal that is more intense and longer lasting than both speed and cocaine. Methamphetamines may be known as meth, crank, glass, speed, crystal, ice and many others depending on what area of the country you are in.

IS THERE A METH LAB COOKIN' IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD?



Many people may be unaware that they're living near a meth lab. Here are some things to look for:

- Unusual, strong odors (like cat urine, ether, ammonia, acetone or other chemicals).
- Residences with windows blacked out.
- Renters who pay their landlords in cash. (Most drug dealers trade exclusively in cash.)

- Lots of traffic - people coming and going at unusual times. There may be little traffic during the day, but at night the activity increases dramatically.
- Excessive trash including large amounts of items such as: antifreeze containers, lantern fuel cans, red chemically stained coffee filters, drain cleaner and duct tape.
- Unusual amounts of clear glass containers being brought into the home.

Presence of the following items could indicate the existence of a meth lab:

Alcohol
Ether
Benzene
Toluene/Paint Thinner
Freon
Acetone
Chloroform
Camp Stove Fuel/Coleman Fuel
Starting Fluid
Anhydrous Ammonia
"Heet"
White Gasoline
Phenyl-2-Propane
Phenylacetone
Phenylpropanolamine
Iodine Crystals
Red Phosphorous
Black Iodine
Lye (Red Devil Lye)
Drano
Muriatic/Hydrochloric Acid
Battery Acid/Sulfuric Acid
Epsom Salts
Batteries/Lithium
Sodium Metal
Wooden Matches
Propane Cylinders
Hot Plates
Ephedrine (over-the-counter)
Cold Tablets
Bronchodialators
Energy Boosters
Rock Salt
Diet Aids

If you suspect meth activity contact the Dresden Police Department Drug Investigations Unit at 364-2255.

What are possible health effects from exposure to meth lab contaminants?

Many of the contaminants present during meth's cooking process can be harmful if someone is exposed to them. These contaminants can cause health problems including respiratory (breathing) problems, skin and eye irritation, headaches, nausea and dizziness. Acute (short-term) exposures to high concentrations of some of these chemicals, such as those law enforcement officers face when they first enter a lab, can cause severe health problems including lung damage and burns to different parts of the body.

There are severe known risks to one health due to the effects from chronic (long-term) exposure to contaminants left behind after a meth lab is dismantled. Until the contaminants have been identified, their quantities measured, and their health effects known, we advise property owners to exercise caution and use the safest possible cleaning practices in dealing with a former meth lab property and any possible remaining contamination. Contacting a professional hazardous materials cleanup contractor is the safest method and may be the only way to cleanup the location within federal legal guidelines and laws.

The potential health effects depend on

- the specific chemicals to which a person is exposed
- how much of each chemical to which a person is exposed,
- how long a person is exposed, and
- the health condition of the person being exposed.

Exposure to meth residues may cause symptoms similar to those experienced by meth users.

Exposure to volatile organic compounds (VOCs) may cause symptoms such as nose and throat irritation, headaches, dizziness,

nausea, vomiting, confusion and breathing difficulties. Benzene is a VOC known to cause cancer.

Acids or bases will cause a burning sensation on the skin and in mucous membranes, and can cause severe eye damage. Exposure to metals and salts can cause a wide range of health effects including respiratory irritation, decreased mental function, anemia, kidney damage and birth defects.

Dangers to Children Living at Meth Labs

A child living at a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory is exposed to immediate dangers and to the ongoing effects of chemical contamination. In addition, the child may be subjected to fires and explosions, abuse and neglect, a hazardous lifestyle (including the presence of firearms), social problems, and other risks.

Chemical contamination. The chemicals used to cook meth and the toxic compounds and byproducts resulting from its manufacture produce toxic fumes, vapors, and spills. A child living at a meth lab may inhale or swallow toxic substances or inhale the secondhand smoke of adults who are using meth; receive an injection or an accidental skin prick from discarded needles or other drug paraphernalia; absorb methamphetamine and other toxic substances through the skin following contact with contaminated surfaces, clothing, or food; or become ill after directly ingesting chemicals or an intermediate product. Exposure to low levels of some meth ingredients may produce headache, nausea, dizziness, and fatigue; exposure to high levels can produce shortness of breath, coughing, chest pain, dizziness, lack of coordination, eye and tissue irritation, chemical burns (to the skin, eyes, mouth, and nose), and death. Corrosive substances may cause injury through inhalation or contact with the skin. Solvents can irritate the skin, mucous membranes, and respiratory tract and affect the central nervous system. Chronic exposure to the chemicals typically used in meth manufacture

may cause cancer; damage the brain, liver, kidney, spleen, and immunologic system; and result in birth defects.[6] Normal cleaning will not remove methamphetamine and some of the chemicals used to produce it. They may remain on eating and cooking utensils, floors, countertops, and absorbent materials. Toxic byproducts of meth manufacturing are often improperly disposed outdoors, endangering children and others who live, eat, play, or walk at or near the site.[7]

Fires and explosions. Approximately 15 percent of meth labs are discovered as a result of a fire or explosion. Careless handling and overheating of highly volatile hazardous chemicals and waste and unsafe manufacturing methods cause solvents and other materials to burst into flames or explode. Improperly labeled and incompatible chemicals are often stored together, compounding the likelihood of fire and explosion. Highly combustible materials left on stovetops, near ignition sources, or on surfaces accessible to children can be easily ignited by a single spark or cigarette ember. Hydrogenerators used in illegal drug production "constitute bombs waiting to be ignited by a careless act."[8] Safety equipment is typically nonexistent or inadequate to protect a child.

Abuse and neglect. Children living at methamphetamine laboratories are at increased risk for severe neglect and are more likely to be physically and sexually abused by members of their own family and known individuals at the site. Parents and caregivers who are meth dependent typically become careless, irritable, and violent, often losing their capacity to nurture their children. In these situations, the failure of parents to protect their children's safety and to provide for essential food, dental and medical care (including immunizations, proper hygiene, and grooming), and appropriate sleeping conditions is the norm. Older siblings in these homes often assume the role of caretaker.[9] Some addicted parents fall into a deep sleep for days and cannot be awakened, further increasing the likelihood that their children will be exposed to toxic chemicals in their environment and to abusive acts committed by the other drug-using individuals who are present. Children living at

meth lab sites may experience the added trauma of witnessing violence, being forced to participate in violence, caring for an incapacitated or injured parent or sibling, or watching the police arrest and remove a parent.[10]

Hazardous lifestyle. Hazardous living conditions and filth are common in meth lab homes. Explosives and booby traps (including trip wires, hidden sticks with nails or spikes, and light switches or electrical appliances wired to explosive devices) have been found at some meth lab sites. Loaded guns and other weapons are usually present and often found in easy-to-reach locations. Code violations and substandard housing structures may also endanger children. They may be shocked or electrocuted by exposed wires or as a result of unsafe electrical equipment or practices. Poor ventilation, sometimes the result of windows sealed or covered with aluminum foil to prevent telltale odors from escaping, increases the possibility of combustion and the dangers of inhaling toxic fumes. Meth homes also often lack heating, cooling, legally provided electricity, running water, or refrigeration. Living and play areas may be infested with rodents and insects, including cockroaches, fleas, ticks, and lice. Individuals responding to some lab sites have found hazardous waste products and rotten food on the ground, used needles and condoms strewn about, and dirty clothes, dishes, and garbage piled on floors and countertops. Toilets and bathtubs may be backed up or unusable, sometimes because the cook has dumped corrosive byproducts into the plumbing.[1]

The inability of meth-dependent and meth-manufacturing parents to function as competent caregivers increases the likelihood that a child will be accidentally injured or will ingest drugs and poisonous substances. Baby bottles may be stored among toxic chemicals. Hazardous meth components may be stored in 2-liter soft drink bottles, fruit juice bottles, and pitchers in food preparation areas or the refrigerator. Ashtrays and drug paraphernalia (such as razor blades, syringes, and pipes) are often found scattered within a child’s reach, sometimes even in cribs. Infants are found with meth powder on their clothes, bare feet, and toys. The health hazards in

meth homes from unhygienic conditions, needle sharing, and unprotected sexual activity may include hepatitis A and C, *E. coli,* syphilis, and HIV.

Social problems. Children developing within the chaos, neglect, and violence of a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory environment experience stress and trauma that significantly affect their overall safety and health, including their behavioral, emotional, and cognitive functioning. They often exhibit low self-esteem, a sense of shame, and poor social skills.[12] Consequences may include emotional and mental health problems, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school absenteeism and failure, isolation, and poor peer relations. Without effective intervention, many will imitate their parents and caretakers when they themselves become adults, engaging in criminal or violent behavior, inappropriate conduct, and alcohol and drug abuse.[13]

Many children who live in drug homes exhibit an attachment disorder, which occurs when parents or caretakers fail to respond to an infant's basic needs or do so unpredictably. These children typically do not cry or show emotion when separated from their parents. Symptoms of attachment disorder include the inability to trust, form relationships, and adapt. Attachment disorders place children at greater risk for later criminal behavior and substance abuse. To minimize long-term damage, children from these environments require mental health interventions and stable, nurturing caregivers.

Other risks. Dangerous animals trained to protect illegal meth labs pose added physical hazards, and their feces contribute to the filth in areas where children play, sleep, and eat. Many children who live in meth homes also are exposed to pornographic materials or overt sexual activity. Others may actually be involved in the manufacturing process but receive no safety gear to protect them from noxious chemical fumes.