

Some Information on METH and Awareness:

Strong, unpleasant smells. Anyone who has ever owned a cat will recognize the acrid smell of ammonia. If you notice "cat urine" smell strongly emanating from a nearby building, or notice any other strong chemical smells, it's unlikely that cats are to blame - especially if any of the following observations coincide with the smell.

Deliberate attempts to prevent anyone from seeing inside the building. Often the questionable building either has no windows or, more suspiciously, the windows are covered somehow.

Lots of traffic. A meth lab will have many frequent, brief visits at strange hours of the day, often at night in the hopes that all neighbors are asleep.

Copious quantities of garbage. Meth ingredients obviously involve chemicals. A meth lab uses lots of laboratory chemicals like stove fuel, white gasoline, ammonia, propane tanks, paint thinner and antifreeze, not to mention cold and diet pills. And other laboratory supplies involve equipment like glass containers and tubing is always in use. If your neighbor is careless enough to leave all of the empty containers out on the curb for garbage pickup, then the sheer quantity of trash should make you suspicious. But **you should never inspect the garbage yourself**; meth lab equipment and waste are extremely hazardous. It's far more likely that your neighbor will never leave the garbage out at the curb for pickup, but instead always ship the garbage elsewhere so as to avoid detection.

Secrecy. Whether in an apartment or a house, your neighbor will likely want nothing to do with you. If you've tried to interact with your neighbor, but always found yourself talking through a closed or barely cracked door (and notice any other strange activity or smells), the neighbor may be hiding a meth lab from you. However, **you must never approach a building or residence where you already suspect meth cooking.** Not only might the lab explode, but also the toxic fumes of a meth lab can kill a person.

Rent paid in cash. If you're a landlord, a tenant running a meth lab would almost certainly pay rent in cash.

All this, and then nothing. When people know they are making meth, the cookers often abandon their meth labs, but that hardly means you and other neighbors can breathe a sigh of relief yet. An abandoned meth lab is still a toxic environment containing hazardous, volatile waste. Report such a building to local law enforcement.

Step 1

Notice whether the building has blacked out windows. The occupants don't want anyone looking in and will go to great lengths to keep their activities private. There may also be an unusual amount of security such, as bars on the windows that seem to be out of place for the area.

Step 2

Observe whether there are a large amount of people coming and going without staying long. This usually happens later in the evening and into the night. Meth labs have been uncovered in all types of neighborhoods, but most often they are in secluded, rural areas.

Step 3

Smell the air near the suspected meth lab. A smell of very strong cat urine or rotten eggs is the description some have given for the odor of meth cooking and the chemicals used in the process.

Step 4

Take into account the kind of and the amount of garbage around the building. There's a lot of waste associated with a meth lab and usually the occupant burns it frequently. Some of the trash items are empty containers of drain cleaner, kitty litter bags, peroxide bottles, cold medicine packaging, iodine and plastic tubing. Look for large quantities of these items, which would be unusual for a normal household.

Step 5

Think about the unusual items which most people don't have in abundance, such as propane cylinders and fire extinguishers, which have been altered to store anhydrous ammonia. A lot of glass jars, hot plates or electric skillets, chemistry flasks and other types of lab equipment are found in a meth lab or in their trash pile.

Step 6

Get to know who lives in your area. Be observant and vigilant. There are other illegal activities usually associated with this type of crime, and you need to be able to spot one of these labs if it's set up in your neighborhood. Meth labs are very dangerous and have been the cause of death and destruction of property due to the volatile nature of the ingredients used.

Here are a few things that would possibly get our attention, and remember, none of these things, *in and of themselves* necessarily mean anything. But combined, they *could* mean something.

- Frequent visitors to a house at all hours of the day and night, often coming and leaving within fifteen to twenty minutes. (long enough to make a buy) In many cases, one person would wait in the car while another ran inside.
- You notice vehicles pulling up to the house that are really dirty, yet the license plates are clean as a whistle. Or you notice that the locks on the car are punched out. (Both possible indicators of a stolen vehicle.)
- You notice that whenever a certain condition exists with the house, that's when cars start pulling up and people going inside. Perhaps something like a porch light being on, etc. This might be a signal that "product" is ready.
- Sometimes it appears like there's a garage sale being conducted inside the house because people keep showing up with power tools, electronics, and other things easily converted to cash. These might be people trading or "fencing" merchandise for meth.
- Visitors to the house park far away from the house and walk up to it even when there's space to park right in front.
- There are what could be, "Meth projects" around the house. Remember, meth addicts love to keep busy, but usually never complete anything. So often around their house you'll find everything from lawn mowers to cars that have been taken apart and never put back together.
- Occupants of the house appear in what seem like "waves" of activity followed by a wave of inactivity. For example, for several days straight you'll see them highly active, talkative and energetic. Then for the next three days, they're inside sleeping around the clock. This is typical of the meth binge/ crash/ recovers cycle.
- Occupants of the house don't seem to have jobs, and pay for everything (i.e.: rent) in cash.
- Occupants appear unfriendly and secretive about their residence.
- There's a lot of security around the residence.
- Windows are blackened out, covered in tin foil, or shades and curtains always drawn shut.
- Chemicals odors coming from the house or the garbage they put out. The exact odor can vary depending on a lot of factors, but often it will smell like a hairdressing salon, cat urine, ammonia, acetone, or nail-polish remover.
- The presence of coffee filters, bed sheets or other material stained red. (This comes from filtering red phosphorus, an ingredient in one recipe of meth making.)

- Burned or scorched areas of the lawn underneath where garbage bags are put out. This can be an indication that the garbage bags contain corrosive chemicals or other "hot" chemicals.
- The individual puts their garbage in front of someone else's house for pickup.
- Unusual, often frenetic activity at unusual hours. (Washing windows, or mowing the lawn late at night.)
- Empty containers of the precursor chemicals mentioned earlier in "How Meth Is Made."
- Kids and/or pets always seem unkempt, unsupervised and rarely if ever leave the house.
- There are lots of visitors to the house who are in their teens, yet the occupants of the house have no children of that age group.

Remember, *no single characteristic here means anything*. Unattended children could just mean bad parenting, and curtains always drawn could mean someone is a bit obsessive about their privacy. Above all else, if you do suspect something, do not trespass on their property, do not touch or handle anything suspicious and realize the responsibility you're taking on if you do call the proper authorities.

Wherever clandestine meth labs exist, drug dealers, innocent neighbors and law enforcement personnel are at risk.

You don't have to be a meth user to be affected by the drug.

- The very air you breathe may be contaminated from a meth house or location. Many times the toxic chemicals cause a myriad of physical problems including headaches, nausea, dizziness, confusion, breathing difficulties, skin & eye irritation, decreased mental capacity, anemia, kidney damage and birth defects as well as the possibility of cancer caused by the caustic chemicals used in the meth making process, all these health issues translate into more Dr hospital & emergency room visits and higher insurance costs.

Every pound of meth produced leaves behind 5 to 6 lbs of toxic waste.

- This waste leads to contaminated soil and groundwater. The toxic effects from meth dumping can persist in the groundwater for years.

- Residences including motels, furniture, curtains, bedspreads, flooring, air vents & walls may be contaminated.

- Landfills are being filled with toxic byproducts from Meth Lab sites which may cause increases in garbage fees.

Dump sites from meth also have a huge impact on our community.

- You may find meth dumps along highways, in parks & forests, buried in the ground leaching into the water system. Being flushed down into our sewer systems, in garbage containers within reach of neighbors, children & pets.

- Fires from meth lab explosions are at an all time high.

Cost to landlords & home owners.

- The cost to test a home for meth residue and by products can cost \$500.00 to \$1,000.00.
- The cost of cleaning meth home ranges from \$5000.00 to 150,000.00 at a cost to the landlord or home owner and in most cases insurance doesn't cover these costs. The homes once deemed meth houses cannot be sold or rented until the home has been cleaned and approved by local authorities as safe to inhabit.

Crime in neighborhoods with meth labs.

- Show an increased criminal activity, domestic violence, increased medical costs, spread of sexually transmitted diseases, and lost worker productivity (up to 75% of full & part time employees have been under the influence of meth at least once in the work place)
- Communities & neighborhoods also lose when homes are broken into and items are stolen for re-sale, pawned or for drugs or money to buy drugs. Some meth users have stolen from parents, friends and family members. They've stolen credit cards and maxed them out. Many have stolen checks and forged names to buy drugs.