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Clandestine Laboratories: What Probation and Parole Officers Need to Know

Michael McCampbell
Project Director
COPS National Clandestine Laboratory Training Project, Circle Solutions, Inc.

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Objectives

• Recognize the signs of a clandestine laboratory
• Recognize the hazards to probation and parole personnel
• Identify common chemicals, glassware, and equipment at a "clan lab"
• Identify the two most common methods of synthesizing methamphetamine
• List recommendations for action

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Methamphetamine

First the “Good News”

A highly psychologically addictive CNS stimulant that increases the heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, rate of breathing, and dilates the pupils.

Produces euphoria, increases alertness, decreases appetite and gives feeling of increased energy, aggression and sexual appetite.

American Probation and Parole Association
Clandestine Methamphetamine Laboratories: What Probation and Parole Officers Need to Know
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Methamphetamine

now the bad...

The initial feelings of physical and mental enhancement following binges of high or chronic doses often result in confusion, paranoia and hallucinations.

This is in many ways similar to paranoid schizophrenia. Users may have violent responses to these delusions.

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Methamphetamine

• Meth, Crystal, Speed, Ice, Crank, Go-fast, Yaba, Biker’s coffee
• Referred to as “Crack of the New Millennium”
• “As easy as baking a cake” to produce

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America’s Meth Problem

- CY 2002, 5.3% of U.S. population (over 12 million people) used meth at least once, up from 4.3% of U.S. population (9.6 million people) in CY 2001 (SAMSA).
- FY 2000, 8,382 meth arrests by DEA (11% of all DEA arrests).
- CY 2003, 36.2% of all state and local law enforcement agencies identified meth as their greatest drug threat.

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America’s Meth Problem

- Meth related episodes at emergency rooms increased 29%, 1999-2000 (DAWN)
- CY 2002, 17,695 emergency room mentions for meth, up nearly 3,000 from CY 2001

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America’s Meth Problem (continued)

• 65 percent of all property crime arrests in Oregon are meth related.
• 80 percent of all police-involved shootings in Kentucky are meth related.
• AG of North Dakota has stated that meth is the worst drug to ever hit the state—resulting in entire towns being decimated.

America’s Meth Problem (continued)

• 90 percent of all child abuse cases in a Western state’s county related to methamphetamine.
• Last two Oklahoma State Troopers killed in the line of duty were shot by suspects with meth labs in their cars. Latest death, Dec. 26, 2003.
• April 2004, 2 Bradford County (PA) deputies were shot and killed attempting to serve arrest warrant for meth-related charges.

Legal Medical Uses

– Control narcolepsy
– Appetite suppressant
– Control Attention Deficit Disorder
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Methods of Consumption

- Taken orally
- Inhaled – “snorted”
- Intravenously – injection (water soluble)
- Smoked

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Cycle of Meth Use

- RUSH
- HIGH
- BINGE
- TWEAKING
- CRASH

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Prolonged Use

- “Speed Runs”
  - Taken for several days in a row
  - Immunity/tolerance develops
  - Dosage must increase
- “Paranoid Psychosis”
  - User becomes violent / dangerous
  - Typically includes depression and delusions of omnipotence and persecution
A clandestine meth lab is defined as an illicit operation consisting of a sufficient combination of apparatus and chemicals that either has been or could be used in the manufacture of methamphetamine.

Scope of the Meth Lab Problem

- Over 12,000 lab seizures in CY 2001 and almost 15,000 seizures in CY 2002 (EPIC).
- 298 “Super Labs” capable of manufacturing 10 pounds or more of meth.
- Mexican organized drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) responsible for selling 90 percent of all meth in U.S. but only 10 percent of the meth labs.
- Small, “Beavis and Butthead” labs responsible for the other 90 percent of meth labs.

Two Major Methods of Manufacturing Meth

- Red Phosphorus (“Red P”) Method
- Lithium/Sodium Synthesis Method (“Nazi Dope”) or “Birch” Method
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**Chemicals Commonly Used in the Red P Method**

- Pseudoephedrine/Ephedrine
- Red Phosphorus
- Iodine crystals/Tincture of Iodine
- Acids
- Sodium Hydroxide
- Solvents

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**Major Components of Methamphetamine**

**Ephedrine Reduction Method**

- Ephedrine or pseudoephedrine
- Hydriodic acid
- Red phosphorous
- Iodine crystals
- Hydrochloric – sulfuric - muriatic acid
- Sodium Hydroxide
- Solvents

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**Chemicals Commonly Used in the Nazi Dope Method**

- Pseudoephedrine/Ephedrine
- Lithium/sodium metal
- Anhydrous Ammonia
- Solvents
- Hydrochloric gas
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**Major Components of Methamphetamine**

Nazi Method

- Ephedrine or pseudoephedrine
- Sodium/lithium metal
- Anhydrous ammonia
- Solvents
- HCl gas (sulfuric acid and rock salt)

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**Common Equipment and Chemicals Found in Meth labs**

- Pyrex dishes
- Beakers/glassware
- Pails/buckets
- Mason/Ball jars
- Hotplates
- Gas cans
- Ice chests
- Turkey basters
- Camera batteries
- Jugs bottles
- Aluminum foil
- Red Phosphorus
- Black Iodine
- Anhydrous Ammonia
- Lithium strips
- Sodium Hydroxide
- Sulfuric Acid
- Acetone
- Kitty litter
- Muriatic Acid
- Alcohol/methanol
- Sodium metal

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**Typical Red P Lab**
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Typical Nazi Lab

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Common Meth Lab Locations

- Rural areas
- Apartments
- Hotels
- Attics
- Basement
- Campsites
- Cars/trucks
- Campers
- Farms
- Houseboats
- Self-storage units
- Sheds
- Vans
- Garages
- Trailers
- Mobile homes

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Hazards of Clan Labs

- Active lab with a cook in progress
- Inactive lab (recently used to cook meth)
- The human factor
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**Active Lab Hazards**

- Poisonous gasses or toxic smoke from chemicals such as red phosphorous and black iodine.
- Fires or explosions from vapors coming from substances such as ether, methanol, and other organic solvents (paint thinner, acetone, etc.).
- Corrosive fumes from acids and bases such as hydrochloric or sulfuric acid, muriatic acid, or lye.
- Caustic burns or poisonous gasses from anhydrous ammonia.
- Explosions caused by lithium coming in contact with water.
- Hydrogen chloride gas fumes.

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**Inactive Lab Hazards**

- Contamination of rugs, walls, other surfaces.
- Left over hazardous waste (each pound of finished product produces 5 pounds of hazardous waste).
- Leaking containers of solvent, acid, etc.
- Chemical reactions may re-start if equipment is disturbed.

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- Chronic meth abusers may exhibit violent, psychotic behavior, paranoia, and anxiety. This is especially true during the “tweaking” phase.
- Meth abusers who inject the drug may have HIV, hepatitis B, etc.
- Bad guys with guns—many lab operators have one or more firearms at their lab sites.
Recommendations for Action

• Every parole and probation officer should have at least 4 hours of training on clan lab recognition, hazard identification, and symptoms of meth abuse.

• Parole and probation personnel should work closely with law enforcement agencies at all levels to address the clan lab issue.

Recommendations for Action

• Personnel coming upon a suspected active lab should leave immediately and contact law enforcement.

• Personnel entering a possible inactive lab should note equipment, glassware, etc., and the presence of any children. Contact law enforcement.

• Probation and parole and law enforcement need to share information on possible lab locations, suspects, and meth abusers.

Recommendations for Action

• Policies and procedures should be developed to guide personnel who may come in contact with a clan lab
  – Actions to take (and not to take) at a suspected clan lab site
  – Enhanced collaboration with law enforcement agencies
  – Who to contact in case of a suspected lab site.
Conclusions and Final Comments

- The nation’s clan lab crisis will continue to increase as long as the ingredients are easy to obtain.
- The dangers to probation and parole officers and the community involve fire, explosion, toxic gases, hazardous waste, and the drug itself.
- Coordinated effort among numerous agencies and the community to develop a coordinated response to the problem.

For More Information Contact

Michael S. McCampbell, Project Director
Circle Solutions, Inc.
703-902-1225
MMccCampbell@circlesolutions.com