

Employee Safety Tips

Methamphetamine is a dangerous drug that poses serious health and environmental dangers. The drug can be manufactured cheaply using household and agricultural chemicals that are very toxic and can explode or ignite without warning. Individuals who work in or near homes where a meth lab is present are extremely vulnerable and at high risk for injury. Sanitation workers, postal services employees, utility workers, cable installers, meter readers and delivery drivers should all be aware of the risks.

BEFORE YOU GO:

- Communicate your schedule and likely route to your supervisor. Notify your office of your arrival.
- Carry only your ID, a cell phone and/or pager, keys and items necessary to your work.
- Do not wear clothes and shoes that might impede your movement.
- Wear a name badge if you have one, but don't wear it around your neck. A clip-on ID is best.

UPON ARRIVAL:

- Park within direct sight of the home's entry. Park in a well-lit, unobstructed area. Don't park in the driveway of the home.
- As you exit your vehicle, be attentive to people in the area and any unsecured dogs.
- Be aware of any drug paraphernalia in the area surrounding the home.
- Keep your hands as free as possible. Do not be distracted by talking on a cell phone. Carry a personal alarm if feasible.

WHILE AT THE HOME:

- Present yourself as calm, confident, observant and in control.
- Be aware of your surroundings and leave if your instincts tell you to.
- Leave the home immediately if you smell chemicals.

BE AWARE OF INDICATORS OF METH USE:

- Hyperactivity and compulsiveness
- Aggressive and violent behavior
- Paranoia and hallucinations
- Restlessness/agitation
- Dilated pupils
- Talkativeness

Possible Meth Lab Activity

UNUSUAL SECURITY / VENTILATION MEASURES:

- Baby room monitors being used outdoors.
- Video surveillance systems positioned to observe exterior of home.
- Elaborate fencing and heavy duty locks when it is not evident what is being secured.
- Fans positioned to ventilate the home.
- Night vision equipment.
- Protective, aggressive dogs.

CHEMICAL ODORS OF METH PRODUCTION:

- Ether-like: Aromatic, sweet odor often accompanied by a sweet taste. Sometimes described as a "hospital odor". **Nasal irritant**
- Solvent-like: Sweet odor from common solvents used in paint thinners, paint removers, adhesives, and cleaning fluids. Type of odor often found in an auto body shop. **Eye and nasal irritant**
- Ammonia-like: Intense, sharp, irritating odor similar to but much stronger than that of wet diapers, glass cleaners, cattle feedlots or fertilizers. **Eye and nasal irritant**

ADDITIONAL INDICATORS OF A METH LAB:

- Reddish stained coffee filters, canning jars with multi-colored liquids, aquarium-type tubing used in bottles or jugs.
- Battery casings, crumpled/burnt foil.
- Light bulbs with filament removed.
- Windows blacked out or covered.
- Bottles with clear tubing in the cap.
- People in and around meth manufacturing may exhibit respiratory irritation and/or chemical burns.

LARGE AMOUNTS OF METH INGREDIENTS SUCH AS:

- Cold and allergy medicine
- Anhydrous ammonia
- Lithium batteries
- Gas-line additive
- Table or rock salt
- Sidewalk de-icer
- Drain cleaner
- Starting fluid
- Camping fuel
- Matchbooks
- Iodine

For more information on methamphetamine and related concerns, contact the Maine Methamphetamine Prevention Project at (207) 621-8118 or www.methwatchme.org

Adapted from the Kansas Methamphetamine Prevention Project.