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## VIII. Fact Sheet: The Environment

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- Methamphetamine is essentially a mixture of pharmaceutical extracts and poisonous materials.<sup>1</sup>
- Ingredients for making methamphetamine are found in over-the-counter cold medicines and diet pills and in such household products as lithium camera batteries, matches, tincture of iodine, and hydrogen peroxide. Flammable products, such as charcoal lighter fluid, gasoline, kerosene, paint thinner, rubbing alcohol, and mineral spirits are often used in the methamphetamine production process.<sup>2</sup>
- Methamphetamine is easily manufactured in clandestine laboratories (meth labs). Cold medicines containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine and other ingredients are “cooked” in meth labs, often using common household utensils, to produce methamphetamine.<sup>3</sup>
- In making methamphetamine, corrosive products such as muriatic acid, sulfuric (battery) acid, and sodium hydroxide from lye-based drain cleaners also may be used.<sup>4</sup>
- Anhydrous ammonia—potentially explosive and lethal—is used in the “Nazi method” of illegal methamphetamine manufacture. In the environment, it can cause serious harm to people making methamphetamine, emergency responders,

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<sup>1</sup> Burns, Scott, Deputy Director for State and Local Affairs, ONDCP. February 6, 2004. Fighting Methamphetamine in the Heartland: How Can the Federal Government Assist State and Local Efforts? Statement Before the House Committee on Government Reform; Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources. [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/testimony04/020604/020604.pdf](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/testimony04/020604/020604.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy. November 2003. Fact Sheet: Methamphetamine. [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/factsht/methamph/](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/factsht/methamph/)

<sup>4</sup> Burns, Scott, Deputy Director for State and Local Affairs, ONDCP. February 6, 2004. Fighting Methamphetamine in the Heartland: How Can the Federal Government Assist State and Local Efforts? Statement Before the House Committee on Government Reform; Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources. [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/testimony04/020604/020604.pdf](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/testimony04/020604/020604.pdf)

and others.<sup>5</sup> In places where anhydrous ammonia is used as a fertilizer, farmers report that their ammonia tanks are being tapped by “cooks,” who use this highly toxic chemical to produce methamphetamine.<sup>6</sup>

- Nearly all of the chemicals used to produce methamphetamine are flammable and corrosive poisons.<sup>7</sup>
- It may cost thousands of dollars to clean up a property where methamphetamine has been manufactured. It is not uncommon for buildings to be razed and rebuilt after a meth lab has been discovered to make these properties safe and habitable again.<sup>8</sup>
- The costs of secondary cleanup, including removing contaminated soil and structures, are often left to the landowner or landlord. Some States place liens on properties until cleanup is completed. When property is deemed commercially or agriculturally unusable, losses to owners can be in the millions of dollars.<sup>9</sup>
- The waste produced during meth manufacture—corrosive liquids, acid vapors, heavy metals, solvents, and other harmful materials—can cause disfigurement or death when touched or inhaled.<sup>10</sup>
- The environmental impact of methamphetamine manufacture is often severe. Producing one pound of methamphetamine involves creating 5 to 7 pounds of toxic waste material, and meth production releases poisonous gas into the atmosphere. Many meth lab operators dump the toxic waste down household drains, in fields and yards, or along roads and highways.<sup>11</sup>
- Because of these toxic meth lab wastes, first response personnel may incur injury when dealing with the hazardous substances. The most common symptoms they suffer are respiratory and eye irritations, headaches, dizziness, nausea, and shortness of breath.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. April 15, 2005. Anhydrous Ammonia Thefts and Releases Associated With Illicit Methamphetamine Production—16 States, January 2000–June 2004. *MMWR Weekly*. 54(14); 359-361. [www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5414a4.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/preview/mmwrhtml/mm5414a4.htm)

<sup>6</sup> Burns, Scott, Deputy Director for State and Local Affairs, ONDCP. February 6, 2004. Fighting Methamphetamine in the Heartland: How Can the Federal Government Assist State and Local Efforts? Statement Before the House Committee on Government Reform; Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy, and Human Resources. [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/testimony04/020604/020604.pdf](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/news/testimony04/020604/020604.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy. October 2004. National Synthetic Drugs Action Plan: The Federal Government Response to the Production, Trafficking, and Abuse of Synthetic Drugs and Diverted Pharmaceutical Products. [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/national\\_synth\\_drugs/](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/national_synth_drugs/)

<sup>10</sup> U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. 2002. Fact Sheet: Meth in America: Not in Our Town. [www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/pressrel/methfact01.html](http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/pressrel/methfact01.html)

<sup>11</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy. November 2003. Fact Sheet: Methamphetamine. [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/factsht/methamph/](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/factsht/methamph/)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

- Since meth labs can be portable and are easily dismantled, stored, or moved, it is easy for their operators to avoid law enforcement authorities. Meth labs have been found in apartments, hotel rooms, rented storage spaces, and trucks. Meth labs also have been known to be boobytrapped, and their operators are likely to be well armed.<sup>13</sup>
- The U.S. Department of Justice estimates that approximately 15 percent of meth labs are discovered as the result of a fire or explosion.<sup>14</sup> However, a source referenced in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report*, dated April 15, 2005, puts the percentage of meth labs found due to a fire or explosion at 20 to 30 percent.<sup>15</sup>
- Under regulations of the Environmental Protection Agency, the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA's) Hazardous Waste Disposal Program contracts for the cleanup of contaminated meth lab sites. The DEA says that the number of such cleanups has "skyrocketed" in recent years, although the cost of these cleanup operations is declining, thanks to improved systems. In FY 2002, DEA estimated that the average cleanup cost was approximately \$3,300, which by 2005 had declined to approximately \$2,000.<sup>16</sup> At sites of large-scale meth manufacturing, or "super labs," these costs may be considerably higher.

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<sup>13</sup> Office of National Drug Control Policy. November 2003. Fact Sheet: Methamphetamine. [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/factsht/methamph/](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/factsht/methamph/)

<sup>14</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office for Victims of Crime. June 2003. Children at Clandestine Methamphetamine Labs: Helping Meth's Youngest Victims. Bulletin NCJ 197590. [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/publications/bulletins/children/](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/ovc/publications/bulletins/children/)

<sup>15</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. April 15, 2005. Acute Public Health Consequences of Methamphetamine Laboratories—16 States, January 2000–January 2004. *Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report*. 54(14):356-359. <http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/govpubs/mmwr/vol54/mm5414a3.aspx>

<sup>16</sup> Joseph T. Rannazzisi, Deputy Chief, Office of Enforcement Operations, Drug Enforcement Administration. September 27, 2005. Statement Before the House Judiciary Committee; Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security. H.R. 3889, the Methamphetamine Epidemic Elimination Act of 2005. [www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/cngrtest/ct092705.html](http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/cngrtest/ct092705.html)