



Protecting Responders In Methamphetamine Lab Investigations



Law enforcement agencies uncovered 7,347 illegal methamphetamine ("meth") laboratories in houses, apartments, trailers, and other sites across

the U.S. in 2006, according to U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) statistics. Meth lab investigations are risky business for police officers, responders, and clean-up crews, who may be exposed to toxic residues on tables, shelves, and other surfaces where meth was "cooked" and stored. To uncover an illegal lab, shut it down, and remediate the property without harm to officers and responders, agencies must identify residual contamination and select appropriate protective clothing for the investigators.

CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has helped law enforcement agencies speed the process of investigating and cleaning up illegal meth labs, while ensuring that officers and responders are protected against toxic exposures. NIOSH developed a portable "wipe" field test to identify toxic residues more quickly than traditional methods, in which samples are sent to laboratories for analysis. This new method provides on-site rapid analytical results in three to five minutes; before the wipe test was available, the process took a minimum of two to five days for offsite laboratory analysis. NIOSH has also provided technical support to help law enforcement agencies use and evaluate this faster method.

For example, in 2007, NIOSH responded to a request by the Grant County, Kentucky Sheriff's Office and the Northern Kentucky Strike Force for assistance in evaluating suspected meth contamination. Using the wipe test, NIOSH scientists identified multiple locations where contamination was present, and provided technical advice on safeguarding officers in controlling the contamination and remediating the sites.

The wipe test has been licensed for commercial use so that law enforcement officials can access this tool directly for their investigations. NIOSH is also working with law enforcement organizations such as the National Corrections and Law Enforcement Training and Technology Center and the International Association of Chiefs of Police to provide training in using the sampling tool.



For more information about CDC at Work, please contact us at (202) 245-0600 or go to <http://www.cdc.gov/washington/>.