
VIII. Fact Sheet: Law Enforcement/Interdiction

- Methamphetamine is a Schedule II drug under the Federal Controlled Substances Act passed in 1970 and amended several times since then. Schedule II drugs have a high potential for abuse; have legal, medical applications in the United States; and, if used regularly, may lead to physical and/or psychological dependence. Other Schedule II drugs include morphine, phencyclidine (PCP), and methadone.¹
- Chronic methamphetamine abuse can result in psychotic behavior, characterized by intense paranoia (possibly leading to homicidal or suicidal thinking), visual and auditory hallucinations, and out-of-control rages that may be accompanied by extremely violent behavior.²
- Prevention, treatment, and enforcement, including interdiction, are critical to disrupting the abuse and trafficking of illicit drugs. Since crop eradication is not an option for a synthetic drug like methamphetamine, it is important to control the precursor and essential chemicals used in its production. Tight regulatory interventions are necessary, while drug-control policies must be balanced with other considerations, such as the public's need to obtain medications for legitimate use without undue interference by law enforcement.³
- By 2002, the National Drug Threat Assessment Survey (NDTAS) showed that nearly one-third of State and local law enforcement agencies said that methamphetamine was their primary drug threat. In the Pacific Northwest, more than 80 percent of law enforcement agencies reporting to NDTAS reported methamphetamine as their principal drug threat. In the West Central region, 74 percent said that methamphetamine was their principal threat.⁴

¹ U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. Drug Scheduling. www.usdoj.gov/dea/pubs/scheduling.html

² National Institute on Drug Abuse. April 1998, Reprinted January 2002. Research Report Series: Methamphetamine Abuse and Addiction. www.nida.nih.gov/ResearchReports/methamph/methamph.html

³ Interagency Working Group on Synthetic Drugs. May 23, 2005. Interim Report to the Director of National Drug Control Policy, Attorney General, Secretary for Health and Human Services. www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/interim_rpt.pdf

⁴ Dana Hunt, Ph.D.; Sarah Kuck; Linda Truitt, Ph.D. May 2005. Methamphetamine Use: Lessons Learned. Abt Associates, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Justice. www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/209730.pdf

- Methamphetamine accounts for an estimated 96 percent of all clandestine lab seizures in the United States. The Drug Enforcement Administration’s El Paso Intelligence Center reported more than 10,000 lab seizures in 2003 and nearly 5,000 such seizures in the first 6 months of 2004.⁵
- California, where hundreds of labs are seized annually, leads the Nation in methamphetamine production, thanks to its numerous “super labs,” capable of producing in excess of 10 pounds of meth per cycle.⁶
- Until recently, pseudoephedrine diverted from or through Canada fueled large domestic methamphetamine laboratories in the United States. In the first years of the 21st century, large-scale production of the drug has been shifting south of the border and is being replaced by Mexican production.⁷
- Authorities estimate that at least 80 percent of the methamphetamine consumed in America comes from super labs in and outside of U.S. borders; about 20 percent comes from smaller domestic laboratories that usually produce no more than a few ounces but may be capable of producing several pounds.⁸
- Large-scale U.S. methamphetamine manufacturing has declined, and high-volume production has shifted to Mexico, in part due to Federal chemical control and enforcement pressures. In addition, a growing number of States have imposed retail controls on pseudoephedrine products, with promising results.⁹
- Between FY 1992 and FY 1998, Federal cases involving methamphetamine tripled from 630 to 2,234, with more than 20 percent of all methamphetamine cases involving use of a weapon, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission.¹⁰
- The Sentencing Commission also reported that in FY 2002, 2,171 Federal cases related to methamphetamine were filed against 4,208 defendants.¹¹

⁵ 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/

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Interagency Working Group on Synthetic Drugs. May 23, 2005. Interim Report to the Director of National Drug Control Policy, Attorney General, Secretary for Health and Human Services. www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/publications/pdf/interim_rpt.pdf

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Dana Hunt, Ph.D.; Sarah Kuck; Linda Truitt, Ph.D. May 2005. Methamphetamine Use: Lessons Learned. Abt Associates, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Justice. www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/209730.pdf

¹¹ Ibid.

- Also during FY 2002, congressional testimony by staff members of the Office of National Drug Control Policy stated that Federal charges had been filed in about 100 methamphetamine lab cases.¹²
- In 2003, a median of 4.7 percent of adult male arrestees and a median of 8.8 percent of adult female arrestees tested positive for methamphetamine at the time of their arrests, according to preliminary data from the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) Program.¹³
- In 2002, between 20 and 31 percent of male arrestees and between 12 and 42 percent of female arrestees in Des Moines, Omaha, Phoenix, Portland, Salt Lake City, San Diego, and San Jose tested positive for recent methamphetamine use. In major eastern U.S. cities, comparable rates were much lower.¹⁴
- In 2003, the cities with the highest percentages of adult male arrestees who tested positive for methamphetamine were Honolulu (40.3 percent), Phoenix (38.3), San Diego (36.2), and Los Angeles (28.7).¹⁵
- A series of Federal legislations have established increasingly severe Federal penalties for methamphetamine-related offenses:¹⁶
 - Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986; Federal Sentencing Guidelines (1987)
 - Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988
 - Crime Control Act of 1990; Federal Sentencing Guidelines (1991)
 - Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996; Federal Sentencing Guidelines (1997)
 - Methamphetamine Trafficking Enhancement Act of 1998
 - Methamphetamine Anti-Proliferation Act of 2000
- Under Federal law, methamphetamine trafficking carries minimum penalties of 5 years in prison and fines of \$2 million for individuals (or \$4 million, if not an individual) for first offenses involving less than 50 pure grams. These penalties are doubled for second offenses or offenses involving larger amounts of the drug.¹⁷

¹² Dana Hunt, Ph.D.; Sarah Kuck; Linda Truitt, Ph.D. May 2005. Methamphetamine Use: Lessons Learned. Abt Associates, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Justice. www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/209730.pdf

¹³ Office of National Drug Control Policy. Updated December 1, 2005. Drug Facts: Methamphetamine—Overview. www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/methamphetamine/index.html

¹⁴ 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/

¹⁵ National Institute on Drug Abuse. Updated May 5, 2005. NIDA InfoFacts: Methamphetamine. www.nida.nih.gov/infofacts/methamphetamine.html

¹⁶ Dana Hunt, Ph.D.; Sarah Kuck; Linda Truitt, Ph.D. May 2005. Methamphetamine Use: Lessons Learned. Abt Associates, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Justice. www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/209730.pdf

¹⁷ Ibid.

- The maximum Federal penalty for methamphetamine trafficking is life imprisonment for two or more prior offenses.¹⁸

¹⁸ Dana Hunt, Ph.D.; Sarah Kuck; Linda Truitt, Ph.D. May 2005. Methamphetamine Use: Lessons Learned. Abt Associates, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Justice. www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/209730.pdf