

## **What if a methamphetamine laboratory is found on my property? FAQ for NC Property Owners**

Clandestine (Illegal) methamphetamine laboratories have been found in many North Carolina counties. Law enforcement officers have discovered methamphetamine laboratories in homes, apartments, hotels, cars and outdoor locations. These labs pose multiple dangers to both public health and the environment. In many cases, children are found living in homes where methamphetamine is made. Children, especially the very young, are at particular risk from exposure to the chemicals in those labs.

As of April 1, 2005, all newly discovered and former methamphetamine lab properties must be cleaned prior to re-occupancy in accordance with North Carolina General Statute 130A-284. The provisions of this law provide a reasonable and practical approach to cleanup clandestine methamphetamine laboratories to protect human health and the environment.

Here are some general questions about methamphetamine laboratories and their cleanup.

### **Q. What kinds of chemicals are used to make methamphetamine?**

**A.** Methamphetamine can be easily made using several different chemical “recipes,” all require one of three chemicals, ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, or phenylpropanolamine. Other ingredients used in the manufacturing process include iodine, red phosphorous, hydrochloric acid, ether, camp fuel, paint thinner, drain cleaner, acetone, battery acid, lithium batteries, and anhydrous ammonia.

Methamphetamine lab “cooks” combine the ingredients in common household items in place of real laboratory equipment. Jars, coffee filters, hot plates, plastic bottles, blenders, pillowcases, tubing, funnels, large plastic storage containers, coolers, and gas cans have been found to be used to manufacture methamphetamine.

### **Q. Is a methamphetamine lab dangerous?**

**A.** The greatest risk surrounding these labs is the dangerous nature of the persons making and using this illegal drug. ***Individuals who believe they have discovered a drug lab should immediately notify law enforcement and should not enter the suspected area.***

Making methamphetamine creates many hazards. Toxic chemical vapors, spills, explosions, and fires make methamphetamine labs dangerous places. Methamphetamine cooks, their family, and first responders are often the ones who are injured. Waste dumped from methamphetamine laboratories can expose people to toxic chemicals. People picking up roadside litter have been injured from wastes dumped from methamphetamine laboratories.

After the lab has been seized many hazards are eliminated by law enforcement. Future occupants and residents may be exposed to contamination from the remaining chemical and drug residues if the property is not cleaned up properly. Infants and young children in contact with the floor and other surfaces are at greater risk for exposure to hazardous chemicals and drug residues by inhalation, ingestion and direct or skin exposure.

### **Q. Can I still use my building?**

**A.** The property cannot be used unless it has been cleaned up according to North Carolina law.

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No one should enter a facility that has been used as a methamphetamine lab unless they are wearing appropriate personal protection equipment.

Symptoms such as headache, nausea, dizziness, and fatigue have occurred in people who entered a methamphetamine lab after law enforcement activities were completed but before the property was properly cleaned and ventilated. If you experience any of these symptoms, contact your health care provider.

### **Q. Who is responsible for cleaning up the property?**

**A.** The owner of the property is ultimately responsible for the cleanup.

### **Q. As an owner, what do I have to do?**

The North Carolina rules require decontamination of properties prior to re-occupancy. Bulk laboratory-related debris including ingredients, containers and wastes found at a methamphetamine lab will be removed in accordance with the Drug Enforcement Administration requirements by the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (NC SBI). However, smaller amounts of methamphetamine and hazardous chemical residues may have contaminated surfaces, drains, sinks, ventilation systems and absorbent materials (couches, carpets, beds etc.)

Preparing the property for re-occupancy includes cleaning to remove chemical residues, debris, possibly furnishings and appliances. You may want to contact your insurance company to see if cleanup is covered by your policy. Although the property owner can conduct this decontamination process, the use of a trained cleanup contractor should be considered. In many cases, it may be more cost effective to dispose of items rather than to clean (decontaminate) the items. Complete structure demolition may also be an option.

### **Q. What are specific requirements of the law?**

**A.** North Carolina General Statute §130A-284 Decontamination of property used to manufacture methamphetamine

[https://www.ncleg.gov/enactedlegislation/statutes/pdf/bysection/chapter\\_130a/gs\\_130a-284.pdf](https://www.ncleg.gov/enactedlegislation/statutes/pdf/bysection/chapter_130a/gs_130a-284.pdf)

North Carolina Administrative Code Subchapter 41D Methamphetamine Decontamination

<https://www.methlabcleanup.com/NC%20CDL%20Rules.pdf>

Property owners must submit a Pre-Decontamination Assessment to the local health Department.

Property owners must use the Pre-Decontamination Assessment to develop a Decontamination Plan. The plan may include

- Disposal of appliances (such as refrigerators, stoves, hot plates, microwaves, toaster ovens, and coffee makers, etc.) used in the manufacture of methamphetamine or storage of associated chemicals
- Removal of excessively stained plumbing fixtures
- Disposal of non-machine washable porous materials, such as upholstered furniture and mattresses
- Removal of all carpet and padding
- Cleaning, painting and/or removal of non-porous materials (walls, ceiling, floors)

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Property owners must provide documentation, receipts, photographs, contractor verification etc. to the local health department

### **Q. What is the process?**

**A.** The North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation (SBI) notifies the local health department (LHD) of a methamphetamine lab seizure in that county. The LHD notifies the property owner of the law requiring decontamination of properties prior to re-occupancy and the rules on how to decontaminate the property. The LHD receives and reviews the decontamination documents provided by the property owner. These documents are retained for three years. The LHD may inspect the property, although it is not required.

### **Is sampling / testing the property necessary? Who should do it?**

North Carolina does not have regulations requiring sampling or testing at former methamphetamine labs. There is not a national standard to determine safe or unsafe levels of methamphetamine residue present at a site. North Carolina does not recommend routine sampling for methamphetamine residue and instead recommends a practical approach based on cleanup and disposal of contaminated items. Depending upon which methamphetamine manufacturing method was used, testing for other contaminants such as mercury or lead may be necessary. Any portions of the structure (walls, floors or ceilings) that are damaged or that will be removed need to be inspected by a North Carolina accredited asbestos inspector or a North Carolina Certified lead inspector before the materials are disturbed.

If the property is tested properly, an experienced private environmental consulting firm should be contacted. See websites below for additional information about testing.

### **Q. Is it possible to find out if a property has been used as a methamphetamine lab?**

**A.** The local law enforcement agency should have the most complete record of former methamphetamine labs seized in the area. Each county health department maintains a list of properties in their county from information received from the SBI. The Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) maintains a Clandestine Drug Lab Registry <https://www.dea.gov/clan-lab>.

### **Q. Where can I get more information?**

**A.** More information concerning methamphetamine labs can be found at the following websites:

N.C. DPH: Methamphetamine Labs

<https://epi.dph.ncdhhs.gov/oea/z/meth.html>

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Voluntary Guidelines for Methamphetamine Cleanup

[https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/meth\\_lab\\_guidelines.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/documents/meth_lab_guidelines.pdf)