



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

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Decontamination of Methamphetamine Laboratories

Overview

North Carolina General Statute §130A-284, Decontamination of Property used for the Manufacture of Methamphetamine required the Commission for Public Health to adopt decontamination standards (Rules) for properties used to manufacture methamphetamine. Rules were codified in the North Carolina Administrative Code, Title 10, Chapter 41D parts .0101 through .0105. Links to the Statute and Rules are found in the references section.

The Rules are intended to decontaminate structures used to manufacture methamphetamine to a condition reasonably safe for habitation. Rules are applicable to properties posted by law enforcement as methamphetamine laboratories. Owners and responsible parties are responsible for the assessing contamination of the property, decontaminating the property, and maintaining records of assessment and decontamination activities. Posted properties shall not be occupied prior to decontamination. Health departments shall verify assessment and decontamination activities by reviewing documentation provided by the responsible party. Health departments may assist responsible parties to understand options to meet the Rule requirements, inspect the property or use other methods to enforce the provisions of the Rules.

The North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Public Health web site http://epi.publichealth.nc.gov/oe/a_z/meth.html contains useful guidance for assessment and decontamination of former methamphetamine manufacturing laboratories. The Division of Public Health, Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch may be contacted at (919) 707-5900, for a list of consultants and contractors who have stated they can perform activities required by the Rules and environmental sampling.

Consultants and contractors on the list voluntarily provided their names and contacts. The list is intended for informational purposes only and is not all-inclusive. The Occupational and Environmental Epidemiology Branch does not recommend or endorse any consultant or contractor, because there is no validated information available about the contractor qualifications, or the scope, and quality of services they provide. Owners in need of professional services should shop around to obtain written estimates, research the past performance, credentials and qualifications of professionals, obtain a detailed contract for the work, and follow the progress of the work closely.

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Decontamination of Methamphetamine Laboratories

Instructions for Decontamination of Methamphetamine Laboratories when required by rule

The instructions and templates are intended to assist responsible parties and health departments to assess, perform, document and verify decontamination of clandestine methamphetamine laboratories in accordance with the Rules.

Step One

Law enforcement, primarily agents from the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation, Clandestine Laboratory Program, post properties as clandestine methamphetamine laboratories, secure evidence for law enforcement activities, and collect both bulk precursor chemicals and wastes generated from manufacturing methamphetamine for proper disposal.

Step Two

Law enforcement notifies the local health department when a property is posted as a Clandestine Methamphetamine Laboratory. Law enforcement should provide the health department a copy of the State Bureau of Investigation Methamphetamine Laboratory Chemical Assessment report. The form should provide basic information about the address, location, production method, precursor chemicals wastes, contaminated locations and contaminated items.

Step Three:

The Health Department shall:

- Contact and inform the owner or responsible party that the property has been posted as a methamphetamine laboratory.
- Notify the responsible party that the property must be vacated and remain unoccupied until decontaminated.
- Provide the responsible party a copy of the instructions, the Pre-Decontamination Assessment Template, the Decontamination Activities Template, the North Carolina General Statute and the North Carolina Administrative Code.

Health departments may assist owners or responsible parties:

- To obtain the obtain the State Bureau of Investigation Methamphetamine Laboratory Chemical Assessment report
- By providing a single point of contact for oversight of the assessment and decontamination process
- By clarifying questions about conditions at the property, the owner or responsible party's obligations, and options for decontaminating the property in accordance with the Rules
- By providing guidance about the types and details of supporting documentation required to verify compliance with the Rules. The health department may set timelines (modifiable as conditions change) for submission of documentation, completion of work and for the health department review.

Step Four:

The responsible party shall:

- Perform an assessment and document the conditions if the property following the Rules using the Pre-Decontamination Assessment Template. Follow instructions from the health department to complete the template the template and provide supporting documentation as required.
- Perform and document decontamination activities following the Rules using the Decontamination Activities Template. Follow instructions from the health department to complete the template the template and provide supporting documentation as required.
- Landlords may dispose of obvious garbage and trash following the waste disposal plan

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- Landlords may dispose of tangible property or obtain a writ of possession in accordance with North Carolina General Statutes Chapter §42-25.9 and §42-36.2.

Step Five

The health department shall review documentation to verify the responsible party has completed all activities addressed in the Rules. If templates and/or documentation is incomplete, the responsible party shall be immediately notified of deficiencies. If the health department accepts documentation that the property has been decontaminated in accordance with the Rules, the property can be reoccupied, reused or returned to service.

The health department shall keep the records of decontamination assessment and decontamination activities for at least three years. Acceptance of documentation and compliance with the Rules does not imply or certify that a property is safe for habitation.

Recommendations

Health departments and responsible parties should review the Pre-Decontamination Assessment prior to beginning Decontamination Activities. The purpose is to assure the property assessment has identified: Rooms where methamphetamine was manufactured; rooms serviced by the same Heating Ventilation and Air-Conditioning (HVAC) as rooms where methamphetamine was manufactured; other rooms where precursor chemicals or wastes were stored; the types of materials, contents, appliances and equipment that must be disposed or can be cleaned; and any outdoor contamination.

Responsible parties should take and label photographs during the pre-decontamination assessment and after decontamination activities have been completed. Photographs may assist to verify that Rule requirements have been met, determine the potential outdoor contamination, and potential for contamination to other property. Include labelled photographs of:

- Exterior features of the structure, appurtenant structures, adjacent structures, wells, wastewater drain fields, waste piles or burn pits
- Rooms where methamphetamine was manufactured, rooms that share the same HVAC as the room where methamphetamine was manufactured, rooms where precursor chemicals were stored, and rooms where wastes were stored or disposed. Take photographs of floor coverings, walls, ceilings, any spills or staining suspected to be associated with methamphetamine manufacturing, plumbing fixtures, appliances, supply diffusers, and return grills.

Responsible parties and contractors benefit from keeping records that may include, but not limited to: the times, names, dates, duration and purpose that people enter the property; the time spent on assessment and decontamination activities; details and receipts of expenses associated with assessment and decontamination activities including consultant fees, labor costs, disposal costs and costs for supplies, materials and equipment; An inventory of personal property owned by a tenant or others that was disposed as required by Rule.

Voluntary Cleanup

There are circumstances which are not subject to the Rules but where potential risks from residues because of manufacturing or using methamphetamines may be a concern. Examples include but are not limited to places where responsible parties wish to exceed the minimum requirements in the Rules; methamphetamines were suspected of being manufactured or used, but the property was not posted by law enforcement or; in due diligence during real estate transactions.

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The Rules and templates may provide some guidance assessing these situations as well as performing and documenting appropriate decontamination activities. Site specific conditions, good judgement and common sense should be used to modify assessment and decontamination activities based on site and situation. The EPA publication *Voluntary Guidelines for Methamphetamine Laboratory Cleanup* (EPA 2013), is a resource that provides best practices for assessment of contamination, decontamination, and environmental sampling. A link to this document is found in the references.

Environmental Sampling

Environmental sampling may be used to assess the degree of contamination or to validate the effectiveness of decontamination activities by comparison with levels of methamphetamine on surfaces with an acceptable threshold limit.

Consultants, responsible parties who elect to conduct sampling need to predetermine the objectives for environmental sampling and testing, the data quality requirements, and the acceptable threshold limit for methamphetamine residues on surfaces.

Objectives may include qualitative or quantitative identification or characterization of methamphetamine residues on surfaces during the pre-decontamination assessment or to validate effectiveness of decontamination activities. The accuracy, precision and relevance of sampling and analytical procedures are driven by the objectives of the sampling program. Accuracy is how close a measurement is to the true condition. Precision is how test results differ when repeated under similar conditions. Relevance is how test results from a single or set of samples predict conditions at other locations.

Sometimes, one or more semi-randomly samples collected and analyzed using publicly available test kits may be sufficient. When sampling is conducted to validate decontamination activities or for regulatory, legal, financial, or health-based reasons, more accurate, precise and relevant data may be required. EPA Voluntary Guidelines recommend using qualified consultants with knowledge, skills, and the ability to perform investigations and guidance on sampling strategies to obtain high quality data.

There is no federal recommendation or standard for an acceptable level of methamphetamine residues on surfaces after decontamination. Some States require and regulate post decontamination sampling and testing surfaces. According to the EPA Voluntary Guidelines, State standards range from 0.05 micrograms per 100 square centimeters ($\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$) to 1.5 $\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$. The most common State standard is 0.10 $\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$. Some states regulate qualifications for persons who conduct sampling as well as sampling methodology.

No matter objective for environmental sampling, the goal is always to obtain results with sufficient accuracy, precision, and relevance to prove or disprove the theory(s) being tested, that can be reliably interpreted, and can be used to make informed decisions.

References

[North Carolina General Statute 130a-284 Decontamination of Methamphetamine Laboratories](#)

[North Carolina Administrative Code Subchapter 41D Methamphetamine Decontamination](#)

[Environmental Protection Agency, Voluntary Guidelines for Methamphetamine Laboratory Cleanup \(2013\)](#)