

Background on Methamphetamine

**What YOU
need to
know
about the ...**



**Looking Out
for
Our Communities**

WHAT IS METH?

Methamphetamine, also known as meth, speed, crank, or ice, is a powerful and addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. Meth is a synthetic drug produced and sold as pills, capsules, or powder that can be smoked, snorted, injected, or swallowed.

As a neurotoxin, meth damages the nervous system. Its use can cause dependence and addiction, psychosis, stroke, dangerously high body temperature, and cardiac arrhythmia. Withdrawal often results in severe depression and paranoia.

METH PRODUCTION

Meth labs can range from small to large in size. Meth has been made in Canada principally from bulk quantities of chemicals in so-called super labs. Meth production, however, has changed significantly and law enforcement authorities have seen an increase in the number of small labs where meth cooks use recipes, often found online, to create small amounts of the drug from legitimate household products.

While these small homemade labs produce a tiny fraction of the meth a super lab may produce, they present a huge danger to the communities in which they operate because toxic, hazardous, and explosive chemicals are possible byproducts of the production process.

METH CAN BE MADE FROM COMMONLY AVAILABLE, LEGITIMATE HOUSEHOLD PRODUCTS

These small labs can be found in a meth cook's home, in an automobile, or alongside a road. The ingredients used to make meth are legitimate household materials, usually found at retail stores, such as:

- Over-the-counter cough, cold and allergy medicines containing pseudoephedrine or ephedrine
- Acetone
- Rubbing and isopropyl alcohol
- Iodine
- Starter fluid (ether)
- Gas additives (methanol)
- Drain cleaner (sulphuric acid)
- Lithium batteries
- Rock salt
- Matchbooks (red phosphorus)
- Lye
- Paint thinner
- Aluminum foil
- Glassware
- Coffee filters
- Propane tanks

Retailers are in a unique position to help law enforcement in the fight against meth, since the small-scale labs use a number of commonly found household products available at drugstores, supermarkets, and other retail outlets. The Meth Watch Program addresses this problem, and gives communities proven and powerful tools to help curb meth production.



The Meth Watch Program

What you need to know

WHAT IS METH WATCH?

The Meth Watch Program is designed to help curtail the theft and suspicious sales of pseudoephedrine products and other common household commodities used in the illicit manufacturing of methamphetamine in small, underground labs. A key goal of this program is to promote cooperation between retailers and law enforcement agencies to prevent the diversion of legitimate products for illegal use.

Meth Watch is modelled after a highly successful program of the same name that originally started in Kansas as a public-private partnership. As news spread of its success, several American states began to adopt the Kansas model. That prompted the U.S. Consumer Healthcare Products Association to develop a national program that can be easily adapted elsewhere.

The Meth Watch objectives are to:

- Increase awareness by retail employees and management of methamphetamine production and how precursor chemicals are diverted from legal products into illegal manufacture of meth.
- Promote co-operation and teamwork between retailers and law enforcement professionals.
- Reduce methamphetamine production without disrupting the availability of legal products.

HOW METH WATCH WORKS

Meth Watch is a proven and accessible program that has resulted in meth lab seizures, hampered small toxic lab meth production, and decreased pseudoephedrine product losses by retailers. While retail involvement is key, Meth Watch is a voluntary program that involves many people at the community level.

Participating retailers strategically post Meth Watch signs on their store fronts. Using a specially developed web-learning portal, they train their employees to recognize suspicious transactions, without confronting or identifying the customer, and to contact law enforcement when these take place.

BOTH MANAGERS AND EMPLOYEES

have an important role in helping law enforcement stop meth production.

MANAGERS:

- Use Meth Watch decals;
- Place meth-related products in areas with high visibility;
- Tell your employees to never confront someone suspected of being on meth.

EMPLOYEES:

- Be aware of large quantity purchases of meth-related items;
- Be alert to people purchasing combinations of meth-related items;
- Follow your store's procedures for reporting unusual purchases;
- Never confront someone suspected of being on meth.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR RETAILERS?

Retailers are a prime target for meth cooks who may steal or buy large quantities of precursor products from their stores. Meth cooks and addicts can be dangerous and no retailer wants to be a potential source for a meth cook looking to manufacture this substance.

Retailers participating in the Meth Watch Program report safer stores, better customer relations, increased employee awareness, and improved communications with law enforcement. Many stores have experienced a decrease in loss from theft that is directly related to their participation in Meth Watch. Meth Watch partners are helping to unite their communities against drug abuse.

BE AWARE, BUT BE SMART.

Don't take matters into your own hands. Don't confront the purchaser. Inform your manager of suspicious activity. And, depending on your store's procedures, notify the RCMP Chemical Diversion Hotline at:

1-800-387-0020

Tell them you are a Meth Watch Program store and you want to report suspicious behaviour.

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