



Introducing Meth Watch

A Toolkit for Head Offices,
Store Managers and Employees

Introduction

This Toolkit has been developed by the Canadian Meth Watch Program for retailers who sell cold & cough medicines as well as other products (acetone, starter fluid, gas additives, aluminum foil, coffee filters, propane tanks – just to name a few) which are used to produce methamphetamine, commonly known as “Crystal Meth,” “Meth,” or “Ice.”

Participating retailers are asked to display a Meth Watch Program decal in their stores and train their employees/associates to report suspicious purchases of precursor products to the RCMP hotline: 1.800.387.0020.

Supporting materials such as a staff poster and a manager’s pamphlet are available to download on the Meth Watch Program website: www.methwatch.ca. The site also provides a free, 20-minute online training module for associates who will be asked to report suspicious purchases to the RCMP.

Associates should NOT be asked to provide any details such as their name, the store name or any other information unless you determine you want them to. The RCMP simply want to know which districts appear to have individuals purchasing precursor ingredients used in home lab production of meth drugs.

Thank you for doing your part to combat this growing social problem.

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Link to web tools:

www.methwatch.ca

I. Tools to provide to store managers

This section contains materials head offices may wish to provide to managers and others at the store level in rolling out the program. They are templates that can be adapted to each organization's processes, systems, unique culture, and, of course, the style of individuals. They consist of:

- **cover letters** – one version from the senior executive responsible for store operations and one from the senior executive of your organization to endorse the organization's participation in Meth Watch, thanking the managers and their staff for their efforts and support, and outlining expectations of them;
- **tips for introducing the Meth Watch program to employees** – suggestions on how to engage employees;
- **templates** – draft key messages and Q&A,
- **ready to use tools** – examples of the downloadable pamphlet, poster, etc.

Draft cover letter from Executive in charge of store operations

[Date]

Dear [store manager]

Introducing the Meth Watch Program

As you may have heard over the past few months, there is a Canada-wide effort to curb the retail diversion of precursor ingredients used in the production of methamphetamine. [Company name] has agreed to participate in this program, called Meth Watch, which is being launched this month.

We have decided to support this program because we believe it will effectively combat a significant social health problem that affects our communities. The illegal production and sale of crystal meth made by using nonprescription cold products and other readily available consumer products is resulting in serious addiction problems and putting many people in affected communities at serious risk. While there is not a great deal of concrete evidence to suggest that retail diversion is a major element of the methamphetamine problem right now, we are convinced that it will be in the near future, given that law enforcement has bulk diversion at source increasingly under control. This is what has occurred in other countries such as the United States.

From discussions with policy-makers and Coalition partners, we know that this type of social responsibility program is a preferred approach that can impact the meth problem in our communities.

The Meth Watch Program is adapted from a program of the same name that has been implemented in the US with good results.

We ask that you display the Meth Watch decal in your store front to signal participation. The decal bears the Meth Watch Program website address (www.methwatch.ca) which will also facilitate employees' easy access to materials and help them understand their role in implementing the program. This means providing employees with access to training through either a hard copy program or a free, 20-minute online learning program explaining how to recognize suspicious transactions without confronting or necessarily identifying the customer, and how to contact law enforcement by calling the RCMP diversion hotline 1-800-387-0020.

[insert details here if head office is supporting the above in any way]

There may be an opportunity to use the Meth Watch Program as a staff development and team-building project.

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The Meth Watch Program has prepared the enclosed materials to help you implement the program and I encourage you to contact [names] for assistance. We are prepared to help you in any way necessary.

I thank you in advance for your efforts to support this and look forward to knowing the results of those efforts.

[name]

Draft cover letter from organization CEO

Dear [Store Manager]

I'd like to add my voice of support to the Meth Watch Program and everything you and your staff members are doing to make it a success.

Being involved in Meth Watch is simply "the right thing to do". It has us taking responsibility and doing our part to address a burgeoning social problem that impacts our business head-on. Meth Watch is an important part of the role we play in our communities. Some meth cooks are buying or stealing precursor ingredients from our stores. The drugs they are creating with them are leaving our youth addicted, which in turn spurs more crime in our communities.

I encourage you and your employees to embrace the program and I'll be watching with great interest.

[name of CEO]

Tips for introducing Meth Watch to employees

Before communicating with employees

Determine what your policy is going to be regarding sales of the affected products. What will you consider “suspicious activity” (for example, sales quantities of particular products). [This determination is up to individual stores or head office may set their own criteria.]

Advance planning helps to identify and address questions, concerns and issues that may come up so that the implementation goes smoothly.

- Determine how employees are expected to learn about the program: how they will access the website; when they are expected to do that; what are the limitations and rules, etc. Equally important is to think through what they will not be expected to do (e.g. record identifying information about customers engaged in suspicious purchases).
- Anticipate employee questions and concerns and be prepared to answer them. Key issues will be:
 - Why are we doing this?
 - What am I expected to do?
 - Will I be required to work more hours? Come in early? Develop new skills?
 - How is the company ensuring my safety?
 - Will I be compensated for this?
- It is critical to clearly and frequently articulate the key message that employee safety is most important and that the company is not asking them to take matters into their own hands by confronting customers or identifying themselves in any way.
- Consider how employees can be recognized for their efforts. Is there an opportunity to tie this in with the company's existing human resources initiatives? How can they be recognized among their peers for their commitment, for example a “Meth Watch Honour Roll” of participants posted in the staff room?

Introducing Meth Watch

- A face-to-face approach is the best way to tell your staff about Meth Watch, then you can follow up with written materials.
- Make the Meth Watch Program an agenda item at a staff meeting or hold a special session if appropriate.
- Consider inviting members from the community to speak about the importance of the initiative, for example, a local law enforcement officer or someone from a community group. There may even be a community group that has banded to address methamphetamine abuse.

Ongoing

- To maintain interest in and enthusiasm for the program, it's important to share successes and progress. The Coalition will be providing overall results on the program that you can share with staff. In addition, you may want to do something to recognize the success of the program in your own store with your own employees. Additionally, we'd like to hear about those successes so that we can recognize your efforts across the company.

Templates

Key Points for Managers

- [name of organization] is participating in a program called Meth Watch
- Meth Watch is about social responsibility; it's an initiative to demonstrate our commitment to the community and to public health and safety. The purpose of the Meth Watch Program is to curtail the theft and suspicious sale of products that can be used in the illegal manufacturing of methamphetamine.
- The Meth Watch Program has the involvement of retail partners, law enforcement agencies, industry, pharmacy organizations and government who have come together to implement an effective national program to prevent diversion of legitimate products for illegal use. By working together, we can combat the problem of methamphetamine abuse in our community by making it difficult for producers to access the ingredients used to make it. The purpose of Meth Watch is to signal to criminals that there is awareness of their intentions and to help the law enforcement authorities identify and crack down on criminals involved in the production of methamphetamine.
- Retail staff are asked only to be alert to suspicious activity and report that anonymously via a toll-free hotline to the RCMP (1-800-387-0020). Staff are **not** to confront anyone.
- Retailers who call the toll-free line will not need to provide their names or the name of the store but rather only the location (town/city) they are calling from and a description of the suspicious activity. This will allow the RCMP to combine the information with their own intelligence to pinpoint where there is evidence of methamphetamine production.
- Retailers such as community pharmacy, grocery, department stores and others are involved because we sell products that are used as ingredients in the production of methamphetamine and because we have the power and reach to create awareness in our communities. These products include acetone, rubbing (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 and propane tanks.

Answers to Common Questions

What does “suspicious activity” look like?

Each retail operation might have a different policy regarding “suspicious activity”. For example, some might consider it a certain volume of product being purchased at once, or a combination of products in one purchase. [Outline your store’s idea of suspicious activity].

What is expected of me?

[Outline that staff should become familiar with the Meth Watch Program through the learning module and when you have allotted time for them to do that, as well as concessions they get for taking the program].

There is no evidence that retail diversion is yet a significant problem in Canada. Why introduce this program?

The program must be implemented now in order to prevent the problem from developing. The RCMP has told us that we are on the cusp of a serious problem if we don’t act now, based on experiences in other jurisdictions such as the US. With the introduction of the Precursor Control regulations and the RCMP’s focus on preventing diversion from the bulk chemical sector, the problem will now shift to retail diversion. The U.S. experience shows us that it is much more difficult to “put the toothpaste back into the tube.”

We know from the problem that exists in the United States that small-scale home labs pose huge challenges in the fight against the larger methamphetamine problem. Their location in the midst of our communities poses serious environmental and fire safety risks. They drain law enforcement resources away from the battle with large-scale production. Canada can expect retail diversion to become a serious problem unless preventive measures are taken.

Who is paying for this?

Members of NDMAC (the manufacturers of self-care health products, including cough and cold medicines) have supported the development of the program. The participating retailers will be investing in the program through the production of in-store materials and providing employee training and support.

Which retailers are participating?

Member companies of the major trade organizations are being asked to support the Meth Watch Program. We are in the process of engaging the retailers, starting in the geographic areas identified as “hot spots”.

How do we know this is a good solution? How will the Meth Watch Program be tracked – how will you know if it's successful?

The Meth Watch Program is one solution and is broadly supported. Given the community presence of the participating retailers, the goal of prevention and the involvement of law enforcement, the program will succeed. In the state of Kansas, there was a 27 percent reduction in meth lab seizures over the first three years of the Meth Watch Program.

The program will be measured by a number of factors including the number of tips to the RCMP hotline, links to identification of meth labs and the number of employees who use the learning portal.

Ready to use tools and resources

Learning portal:

www.methwatch.ca

Users will be asked to register. This information is kept in strictest confidence and will not be shared for any purpose other than to track the number of users following the course.

Note: The Coalition is developing a hardcopy version of the learning program, and perhaps a CDROM version, and will provide information about the availability of these tools in the near future.

The following materials are downloadable from the Meth Watch site

www.methwatch.ca

- downloadable manager pamphlet:

http://www.methwatch.ca/download/3688_PP3_FLYER.pdf

- downloadable employee poster showing and highlighting precursor chemicals:

http://www.methwatch.ca/download/3688_PP2-1%20AA-POS.pdf

- downloadable file that can be adapted in any size for in-store materials such as a poster and shelf-talker:

http://www.methwatch.ca/download/3710_Poster_PP1.jpg

II. Tools to provide to communication departments

The following section contains tools that head offices can supply to their communication departments to heighten awareness of their company's involvement in Meth Watch and generate support internally and externally.

Draft email or memo from CEO

To all staff

On [launch date] [company name] will lend its name to an important initiative that addresses the terrible social health problem of methamphetamine abuse.

The purpose of the Meth Watch Program is to curtail the theft and suspicious sale of products containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine, as well as other household items that can be used in the illegal manufacturing of methamphetamine.

Canadian retail organizations, law enforcement agencies, industry, pharmacy organizations and government have come together to implement an effective national program to prevent diversion of legitimate products for illegal use. By working together, we can combat the problem of methamphetamine abuse in our community by making it difficult for producers to access the ingredients used to make it.

The Meth Watch Program is designed to help curtail the theft and suspicious sales of pseudoephedrine products and other common household products used in the illicit manufacturing of methamphetamine in small, underground labs.

Being involved in Meth Watch is simply "the right thing to do". It has us taking responsibility to do our part to address a burgeoning social problem that impacts our business head-on and is an important part of the role we play in our communities. Meth cooks are stealing precursor ingredients from our stores; the drugs they produce with them are leaving our youth addicted, which in turn prompts more crime in our communities.

I encourage you to learn about Meth Watch and our involvement in it and I hope you will share my pride in our involvement.

[name of CEO]

Appendix

FACT SHEET #1

What is Methamphetamine and why is it a problem?

What is methamphetamine?

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

As a neurotoxin, methamphetamine 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.

Methamphetamine production

Methamphetamine has been made in Canada and the United States, principally from bulk quantities of chemicals in so-called “super labs.” Methamphetamine production, however, has changed significantly and law enforcement authorities have seen an increase in the number of small labs where methamphetamine 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 methamphetamine 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 by-products of the production process.

Methamphetamine can be made from commonly available, legitimate household products

These small labs can be found in a methamphetamine “cook’s” home, in an automobile, or alongside a road. The ingredients used to make methamphetamine 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)

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- 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 methamphetamine, 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 methamphetamine production.

FACT SHEET #2

What is Meth Watch?

The Meth Watch Program

The Meth Watch Program is designed to help stop people from using pseudoephedrine products and other common household commodities to manufacture 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.

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 methamphetamine.
- 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 methamphetamine lab seizures, hampered small toxic lab methamphetamine 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 and tags on their store fronts and on the shelves where the products are located. 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.