

Risk Alert: Roadside Meth Waste



Two-liter soda bottles can be used to mix and make meth.

With Greenup taking place this weekend please be aware of the potential for material from meth labs to be found on roadsides. It is a good idea for volunteers to know what this material would look like, and what to do in the event it is found.

For every pound of meth manufactured, five to six pounds of toxic waste is produced. Proper "safe" disposal of the waste is expensive and controlled. The people

running meth labs often dump toxic waste or lab equipment without regard for the hazards it causes people, property, and the environment.

This stuff can look just like any other trash commonly dumped at the side of the road, but waste from meth labs may contain or be surrounded by potentially hazardous chemicals. Use the information below to recognize and avoid the dangers caused by contact with the byproducts of meth production.

What is Meth?

Meth is an extremely dangerous and highly addictive stimulant drug that releases high levels of the neurotransmitter dopamine in its users.

The chemicals used to make meth are toxic. The fumes from meth waste can cause itching and burn the eyes, throat, and lungs if inhaled. Physical contact with the chemicals or piles of waste can burn the skin and cause very severe respiratory damage. Protect yourself by knowing what to avoid.

Smell: Know What to Sniff For

Meth lab trash might emit strong chemical odors. It may smell like cat urine, ether, ammonia, nail polish remover (acetone), or similar chemicals.

Sight: Look At the Waste Before Picking it Up

The list below includes items that are used to make meth. When found clustered together, these items indicate that a pile of trash could be waste from a meth lab.

- Anhydrous ammonia tanks, often with brass tank valves that are bluish-green
- Loose pills that look like common cold pills or diet pills, or packaging from cold pills that contain ephedrine or pseudoephedrine
- Empty or full containers that are labeled as Muriatic acid, Freon, or Starter fluid
- Alcohol or methanol ("HEET" brand gasoline additive or rubbing alcohol)

- Camp stove fuel ("Coleman" fuel) or lantern fuel cans
- Red-stained coffee filters, bed sheets, pillow cases, or old clothing
- Iodine crystals (grayish-black and shiny)
- Containers that held sodium hydroxide, sulfuric and hydrochloric acid ("Red Devil" lye), or other drain cleaners
- Red phosphorus (in match books or sticks)
- Ether (engine starting fluid)
- Cans of solvents such as Acetone, Benzene, Toluene, Methyl Ethyl Ketone or Xylene
- Disassembled lithium batteries
- Clear glass containers that look like they're from a laboratory, with rubber or plastic hosing
- Containers from table salt or rock salt

Two liter soda bottles can be used to mix and create meth. These bottles are usually capped, and may have a plastic tube entering the bottle through the cap.

What to Do If You Think You've Found a Meth Lab Dump Site

- Don't investigate, because prodding the material could further endanger you or others in the area
- Immediately contact local police or the sheriff's department to notify them of your suspicions
- Call 911 if you think you've been exposed to toxic chemicals

What to Do If You or a Colleague Is Exposed (After Calling 911)

Signs of exposure to meth chemicals include headache, nausea, dizziness, fatigue, shortness of breath, coughing, chest pain, lack of coordination and burns.

Inhalation Exposure:

Move to fresh air. Give artificial respiration if colleague is not breathing. If breathing difficulty occurs, give oxygen and seek medical attention.

Contact with Clothing or Skin:

Remove contaminated clothing. Flush exposed skin and hair with water for at least 15 minutes. Thoroughly wash with soap and water when possible. Meth can be absorbed through the skin. Seek medical attention if needed.

Contact with Eyes:

Flush exposed eyes with water or saline solution for at least 15 minutes. Remove contact lenses if possible. Seek immediate medical attention.