



CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION



Health and Safety Hazards: **METH LABS**

As lawmakers and law enforcement officials intensify their efforts to halt the production and distribution of methamphetamines throughout California, farmers and ranchers urge them to remember the landowners who have been abused by "fly-by-night" clandestine labs. The illegal labs that produce methamphetamine tend to be located in remote farming areas.

Chemicals and waste materials from the manufacturing of methamphetamines can cause considerable harm to people and the environment. In addition, the cost of cleaning up Meth labs is staggering and usually falls on the shoulders of innocent property owners. With clean up costs as high as \$150,000.

Meth comes in many forms and can be smoked, snorted, orally ingested, or injected. Immediately after smoking the drug or injecting it intravenously, the user experiences an intense rush or "flash" that lasts only a few minutes. As with similar stimulants, users try to maintain the high by binging on the drug.

Signs of a Meth lab:

- Vehicles used are usually older model pickup trucks, vans and rental/moving vans. Items are usually kept covered up in vehicles. Chemical odors may come from the vehicle.
- If you discover chemical odors coming from a field, orchard, disused shed or other structure, notify law enforcement immediately.
- Be aware of boxes or drums with corrosive, flammable, poison placards. Also, laboratory glassware, discarded "pseudophed" boxes or other chemical containers.

What to do if you come across a Meth lab:

- **Remain calm** -- give yourself time to think clearly.
- **Immediately contact** -- your local law enforcement agency.
- **Do NOT approach suspects** -- They are usually armed and dangerous.
- **Do NOT approach the lab area** -- Discarded containers, waste and other materials remaining from the Meth lab can be highly volatile. Do not try to clean up the area. The evidence should remain undisturbed until law enforcement arrives.
- **Keep a safe distance** -- as hazardous materials can ignite or the fumes may overcome you.

How can I keep Meth labs away from my family and property:

- Make sure sheds, barns and other structures have proper locks and security systems.
- Develop positive communication with your local law enforcement.
- Participate in a Farm Watch system or a "good neighbor" policy with people and operations around you. Keep an eye out for suspicious traffic in and around your property, and do the same for your neighbor. Meth manufacturers operate in rural areas to avoid being seen.

What Meth cookers leave behind:

- Paper boxes and packaging from cold tablets
- Coffee filters soaked in alcohol or ether
- Cans, plastic bottles, glass jars
- Hot plates or electric skillets
- Left-over chemicals
- Used syringes
- Plastic tubing
- Plastic bags
- Batteries

Call toll-free **1-866-METH-LAB** to report any suspicious activity that might be a drug lab.



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Health and Safety Hazards: CHEMICALS

Be aware that every chemical substance you handle during the day, whether it is a liquid, solid, vapor, or dust, could cause you great harm if you aren't protected. Your first line of defense is knowing what each chemical can do to you physically and how it can affect your health.

OSHA found that many chemicals cause health conditions including heart ailments, lung, liver, and kidney damage, cancer, reproductive problems, burns, and dermatitis. Such health effects can be acute or chronic.

Acute health effects are those that appear rapidly after a brief exposure to the chemical(s). Chronic health effects are those that appear during and/or after long-term exposure to a chemical(s).

Here are the general chemical categories that are health hazards:

- Carcinogens (cancer-causers) like benzene and formaldehyde.
- Toxic agents like lawn and garden insecticides and arsenic compounds.
- Irritants like bleaches or ammonia.
- Corrosives like battery acid or caustic sodas.
- Sensitizers like creosote or epoxy resins.
- Reproductive toxins like thalidomide or nitrous oxide.
- Organ-specific agents like sulfuric acid (affects skin) or asbestos (affects lungs).

You can determine chemical hazards by looking at the chemical's label and/or its material safety data sheet (MSDS). To minimize exposure, follow the directions you will find there.

Protect yourself by understanding MSDSs (Material Safety Data Sheets) and chemical labels, wearing appropriate personal protective equipment like gloves and goggles, following appropriate safe work practices, and knowing proper emergency response. Talk to your safety director about these methods of protection.

(Information provided by J.J. Keller)

Resources:

Contact [CFBF](#) or your local County Farm Bureau office for information about our library of videos, available to County Farm Bureaus.

Call toll-free **1-866-METH LAB** to report any suspicious activity that might be a drug lab.

Bureau of Narcotics Enforcement - Regional Offices

- Fresno Regional Office (559) 445-5451
- Los Angeles Regional Office (323) 869-2926
- Orange Regional Office (714) 558-4183
- Redding Regional Office (530) 224-4750
- Riverside Regional Office (909) 782-4313
- Sacramento Regional Office (916) 464-2030
- San Diego Regional Office (858) 268-5300
- San Francisco Regional Office (415) 351-3374
- San Jose Regional Office (408) 452-7360

California Department of Justice