

# **METHAMPHETAMINE**

by Deputy Bryan Gandy

Methamphetamine use and manufacture has been a growing problem in Calhoun County since 1999. During that year a total of nineteen Meth labs were located state wide. As of December 13, 2010, there were 652 labs located statewide and 23 were right here in Calhoun County. The counties in southwest Michigan account for over ninety one percent of all Meth labs in the state.

Methamphetamine (Meth) is a psycho-stimulant that significantly affects the central nervous system. Use increases your metabolism, heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature and rate of breathing. Users will most often smoke meth using a piece of tin foil or an improvised pipe. However, it can also be eaten, inhaled, or injected. Meth is considered one of the most addictive drugs on the streets today. Studies show that if you give a group of one hundred people Meth by smoking or injection just two times, ninety of the one hundred people become addicted to it. Once addicted, the recovery rate for addicts is only six percent, which is the lowest recovery rate of any drug.

Meth affects people in a community without them even knowing it. Most obvious is the affect on the user. Users often exhibit severe weight loss and malnutrition, tooth loss, decay, and open sores on their body (commonly referred to as “crank bugs”). Not so obvious effects are on non-users who are affected by Meth labs and their chemical contaminants. For every one pound of meth produced, there are six pounds of hazardous waste left behind. This hazardous waste is dumped in backyards, lakes, rivers, septic and sewer systems, alongside roads and buried in berms. Locations where Meth is made are also contaminated. Users are cooking in rental homes, hotel and motel rooms, apartments, anywhere the “cooks” deem safe to make their drug. Clean up of these sites can be very costly (tens of thousands of dollars). Owners of private properties may be left holding the bill for clean up when persons use their properties to make Meth. Each time a lab is located, a hazardous waste clean up team is required to dispose of the components used during the Meth making process. Meth detection and interdiction also puts a strain on law enforcement and fire department budgets.

Anyone can learn to identify potential sites being used to create Meth or can help identify persons involved. Should you have a suspicion or confirmation about someone or something you observe, refer to contact information at the end of this article.

There are three main ways that are used make meth: (1) Red-Phosphorus method (2) Anhydrous ammonia method and (3) One pot method. Regardless of the method used, the one common ingredient required is pseudoephedrine, commonly found in over-the-counter cold medicine. It is for this reason, legislation was passed to reduce access by limiting sales to behind the counter. Other ingredients vary by process but include: iodine, camping fuel, lithium, drain cleaner, anhydrous ammonia, gas line antifreeze, and other hazardous substances. Chemicals are mixed in a container and a chemical reaction occurs eventually resulting in Meth. Common trash left behind may be the original containers used in the process: soft drink bottles (used as reaction vessels), wadded up

coffee filters, unknown liquids, acids, punctured aerosol cans, and other hazardous waste.

For suspected Meth activity, you are urged to contact law enforcement: 911 or Silent Observer (269) 964-3888. If interested in a Methamphetamine awareness training, call: Substance Abuse Council (269) 968-4699.