Is there a METH LAB Cookin' in your neighbourhood?

Crystal methamphetamine is a central nervous system stimulant from the amphetamine family. Crystal meth is an illegal street drug found in forms that can be inhaled, injected or snorted. It is also known as ice, crystal meth, crank, tweek and fire. Crystal meth is highly addictive and its medium and long term effects can be dangerous. It can cause violent and aggressive behaviour, panic attacks, brain damage and even death. Crystal methamphetamine users may go on binges – during which time they may not eat or sleep but continue taking the drug, adding further health risks. Crystal methamphetamine is usually not used in isolation and many users also turn to alcohol and other drugs.

Clandestine drug labs (meth labs) cause three main types of harm:

1. Physical injury from explosions, fires, chemical burns and toxic fumes.
2. Environmental hazards.
3. Child endangerment.

As you approach a home, watch for these meth lab indicators:

- Unusual, strong odours (such as cat urine, ether, ammonia, acetone or other chemicals).
- Residences with windows blacked out.
- Renters who pay their landlords in cash.
- Lots of traffic—people coming and going at unusual times.
- Excessive trash including large amounts of items such as: antifreeze containers, lantern fuel cans, red chemically stained coffee filters, drain cleaner and duct tape.
- Unusual amounts of clear glass containers being brought into the home.
- Propane tanks with a bluish/green valve.

Presence of the following items could indicate the existence of a meth lab:

Ether , Benzene, Toluene/Paint Thinner, Freon, Acetone, Chloroform, Camp Stove Fuel/Coleman Fuel, Starting Fluid, Anhydrous Ammonia, Phenyl-2-Propane\ Phenylacetone Phenylpropanolamine, Iodine Crystals, Red Phosphorous, Lye (Red Devil Lye), Draino, Muriatic/Hydrochloric Acid, Battery Acid/Sulfuric Acid, Epsom Salts, Batteries/Lithium, Sodium Metal, Propane Cylinders, Hot Plates, Ephedrine, Cold Tablets (pseudoephedrine), Bronchodilators, Rock Salt

One of the best ways to determine whether you may have hit on a meth lab setting can be the behavior of those whom you encounter early on. Some key indicators of meth use are:

Agitation, excited speech, inability to stay still, paranoia, signs of insomnia (users can go for many days without sleep. Asking, "When was the last time you slept?" may yield some valuable insight into the possibility that the individual is involved with meth.), severe anxiety, confusion, irritability/ nervousness, “pounding heart", dry mouth, pupil dilation, gaunt appearance, signs of chemical burns from contact with caustic precursor chemicals and signs of burns on fingers suffered while covering a vent hole on a meth pipe.

Clandestine laboratories have been found in single and multiple family dwellings, motel rooms, campgrounds, mini-storage buildings and motor vehicles, especially rented trucks. Do not enter the area of the suspected lab. Anyone who inadvertently enters a lab should back out immediately without disturbing the cooking process, chemicals or equipment. Do not smoke. If you find indications that a person may be using meth and you have reason to believe that he or she may be involved with its production, immediately treat the situation as though a lab is on site, even if you haven't found it yet. A strong dose of precaution can save your life.

If you think you have discovered an illegal drug lab or the site of an abandoned lab, immediately contact police at 986-6222 or call Crime Stoppers at 786-8477 or 1-800-222-8477. Contact your supervisor.

Endangered Children Protocol

The Province has established a protocol to deal with children and youth who are found in meth labs. For children who are found in the presence of a meth lab, Child and Family Services staff assess the child’s need for protection based on the dangers presented by adults and by conditions in the physical environment. The necessity of a medical examination and/or a toxicology screen is determined on a case by case basis. The protocol also includes staff training and awareness for their own safety and protection.

Public Information on Drug Labs

1. The RCMP has developed information to help Manitobans identify meth labs and suspicious activities, and has made this information available on their website located at http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/mb/index_e.htm. This information will help people become more aware of crystal meth.

2. The Winnipeg Police Service provides information on its web site about clandestine drug labs including the associated dangers, environmental hazards, child endangerment risks and how to recognize an illegal drug lab. Their web site can be located at http://www.winnipeg.ca/police/default.stm.

3. The Province of Manitoba Meth Strategy
http://www.gov.mb.ca/healthyliving/meth.html