

Identifying Clandestine Methamphetamine Labs



Recognizing Lab Indicators

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Clandestine Lab Enforcement Team

What is a clandestine methamphetamine lab?



Definition:

- ▶ Clandestine methamphetamine (meth) lab
 - A physical location whereby a meth lab, meth lab dump site, or precursors used in the manufacturing of methamphetamine are seized by law enforcement.



Is this a lab or trash?



Is this a lab or trash?



Boze Road lab



Boze Road lab



Is this a lab or trash?



Blackstone lab



Blackstone lab



Blackstone lab



A lot of labs are found in trash



Types of meth labs:

- ▶ Ephedrine/Pseudo Reduction
 - Red Phosphorus Method (Red P)
 - Anhydrous Ammonia (Nazi)
 - One Pot/Shake and Bake Method
 - Most common in this area



One pot labs

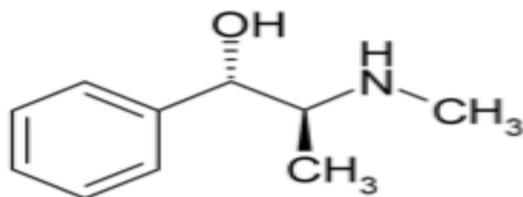
- ▶ Characteristic chemicals
 - Pseudoephedrine
 - Ammonium Nitrate
 - Lithium
 - Salt
 - Sodium hydroxide
 - Coleman fuel (???)
 - Hydrochloric/Muriatic acid



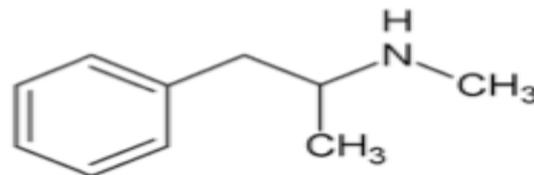
One pot labs

▶ The reaction

- Sodium hydroxide + ammonium nitrate = ammonia gas.
- Lithium is the catalyst that reacts with Ammonia gas.
- Ammonia gas pulls the oxygen atom off pseudoephedrine molecule.
- Petroleum distillates (Coleman fuel) = medium
 - Place for the reaction to take place.
- Copper beads = salivated electrons
 - “We have dope”



PSEUDOEPHEDRINE



METHAMPHETAMINE

Salivated electrons...



Salivated electrons (again)...



One pot labs

- ▶ Unique hazards
 - REQUIRES special handling
 - Do NOT handle bottle until cook has finished reacting
 - Pressurized ammonia containers
 - Water reactive metals
 - EXTREME fire risk
- ▶ Mobile labs
- ▶ Most common lab



One pot labs

▶ Advantages

- Entire reaction done in 1 container
- Efficient
 - 1–2 hour process
- No stealing/making anhydrous ammonia
- Less odor (easier concealment)
- All reagents are **COMMERCIALY** available
- Easy to discard waste



The most important precursor?



One pot labs

1

Obtain Cold/Allergy Pills containing Pseudoephedrine



2

Crush the Pills into a Powder



3

Place the Powder into an empty Bottle - the "Cook Bottle"



4

Add Ammonium Nitrate Pellets to the Bottle



5

Add Lye (Sodium Hydroxide) to the Bottle



6

Add Camping Fuel to the Bottle



One pot labs

7

Tear Apart Lithium Batteries, Remove Lithium, and Add to Bottle



8

Add a Few Drops or a Capful of Water to Bottle



9

Place Cap on Bottle and Shake



10

Allow Pressure to Build in Bottle then "burp" Bottle



11

Continue to shake/agitate Bottle and "burp" every so often



12

Pour Liquid in Bottle through a Coffee Filter and into a Container



One pot labs

13

Take another empty bottle
– the “Gassing Bottle” – and
add Salt and Sulfuric Acid



14

Put a cap on Gassing Bottle that has Plastic Tubing going through the middle of the cap. Place the free/loose end of the Tubing into the Liquid poured out of the “Cook Bottle”. Gently shake the bottle. Hydrochloric Acid Gas is produced and bubbles into the “Cook Bottle” liquid. Methamphetamine crystals form.



One pot labs

15

Pour Gassed Liquid through Coffee Filter. The Coffee Filter catches the Methamphetamine Crystals



16

Dry Crystals with Hairdryer, Stovetop, Microwave etc.



17

Dried Methamphetamine is ready for use/sale



One pot labs

- ▶ Overall dangers to you:
 - Water vs. Lithium
 - Bobby Brown and Whitney Houston
 - Burping and gas pressure in bottle
 - Dormant reactions
 - Movement restarts the process
 - Unknown chemicals and containers
 - Unknown gases
 - Flammable
 - Harmful if inhaled



One pot labs

- ▶ Main cook bottle (plastic)
 - Flash fire ***VIDEO***
 - Flammable gases in environment
 - Dormant reactions
 - Burping
 - **Proper Personal Protective Equipment**
- ▶ Main cook bottle (glass)
 - Evacuate immediately
 - VSP defines this as a BOMB



One pot cook, continued

- ▶ HCL generator bottle
 - Chemical reaction
 - Process starts again with movement
 - Acid gases
 - Can be neutralized
 - Baking soda



Meth lab dump site:

- ▶ Burn piles, public trash cans, roadside, etc.
 - Destroy evidence
 - They cannot arrest me if they have no proof
 - Destroy waste
 - Anywhere you can litter
 - Dangers for you
 - Chemical reactions
 - Exposure to liquids
 - Exposure to *****gases*****
 - Exposure of **lithium to water**



Meth lab dump site

- ▶ On scene “dump site”
 - Mix evidence with trash
 - Haven’t gotten rid of it yet
 - Burn it



Precursors:

- ▶ What are some precursors???



Common one pot precursors:

- ▶ Catalysts / Solvents / Reagents:
 - Ammonium Nitrate (Cold Pack)
 - Lithium (Battery)
 - Sodium Hydroxide (Drano)
 - Sodium Chloride (Salt)
 - Muriatic Acid (Pools)
 - Sulfuric Acid
 - Coleman Camping Fuel



One pot labs

- ▶ Any justifiable reason for these???



Dangers for the first responder

- ▶ What is most dangerous thing in the picture?



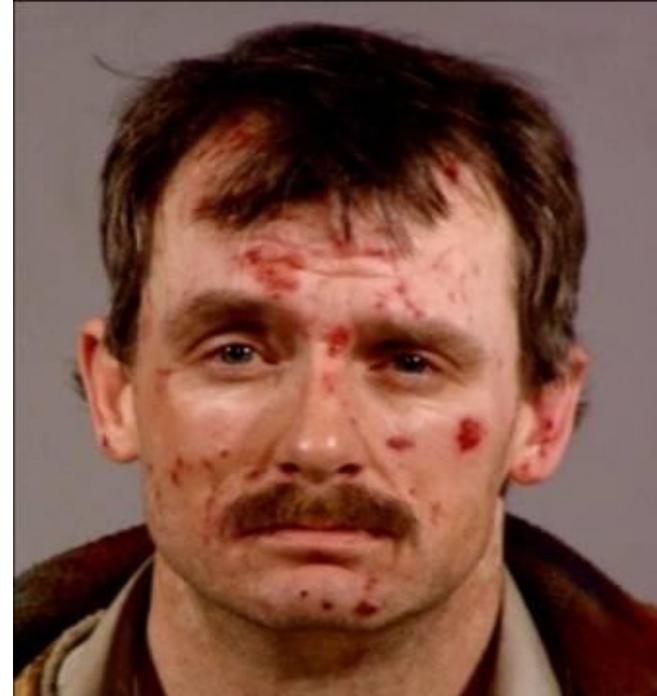
The meth user

▶ Signs/Symptoms of meth user?

- Extreme paranoia
- Violence
- Meth “bugs”
- Meth mouth
- Illnesses related to needle use

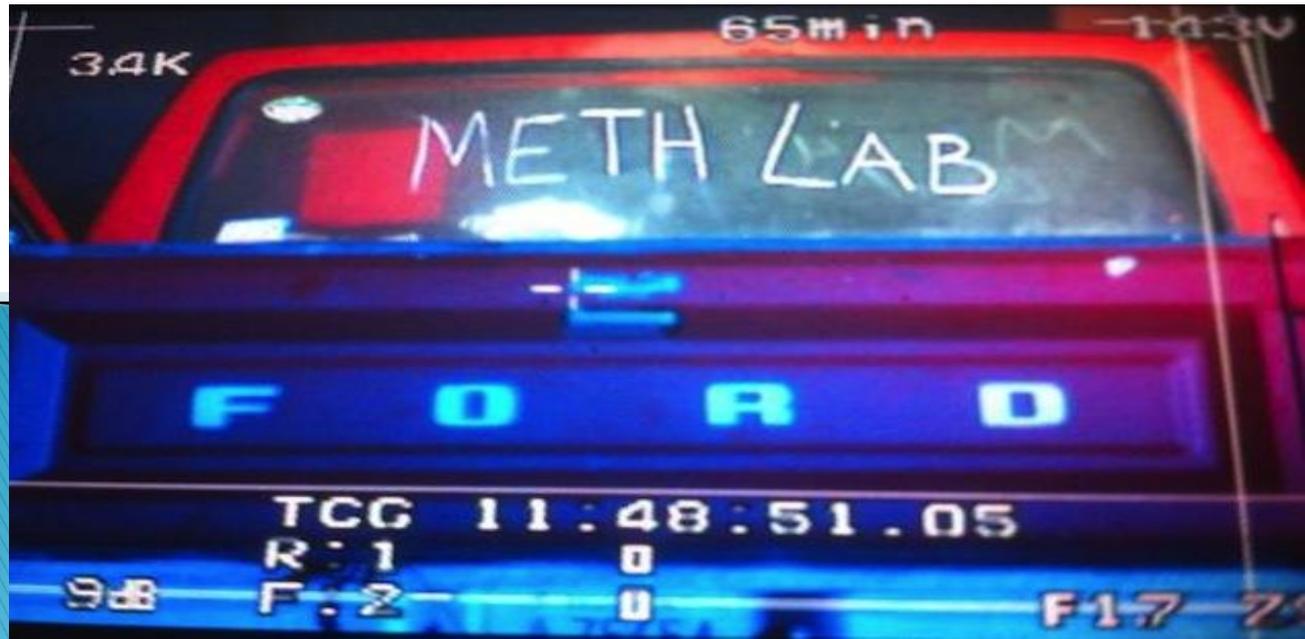
▶ Decontamination

- Industry protocols for exposure?
- Dry/wet decon?
- Extra clothing?



How to protect yourself

- ▶ NEVER!!!!
 - Move ANYTHING
 - Smell ANYTHING
 - Handle ANYTHING
 - Stand near ANYTHING



What to do if you find something

- ▶ Evacuate area
 - Wind/weather concerns
 - Fire concerns
- ▶ Notify YOUR supervisor
 - Industry/site specific protocols
- ▶ Call VSP
- ▶ Safety is paramount
 - Minimum 150 ft. evacuation zone



Prevalence of meth in the Virginia

- ▶ Meth labs reported to VSP in VA in 2015
 - 413
- ▶ Meth labs reported to VSP in VA in 2016
 - 293
- ▶ Meth labs reported to VSP in VA in 2017
 - 173
- ▶ Meth labs reported to VSP in VA in 2018
 - 24 (As of April 8)



Prevalence of meth in D1

- ▶ Meth labs reported to VSP in 2015
 - 9
- ▶ Meth labs reported to VSP in 2016
 - 10
- ▶ Meth labs reported to VSP in 2017
 - 4
- ▶ Meth labs reported to VSP in 2018
 - 5 (As of July 17, 2019)



Questions???



Thank you!!!

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