

TOMS RIVER TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT Standard Operating Guidelines			
CHAPTER: 5	SECTION: 23	# OF PAGES:	
SUBJECT: METHAMPHETAMINE LABORATORY RESPONSE			
EFFECTIVE DATE:	BY THE ORDER OF: Joint Board of Fire Commissioner's and Joint Fire Officers Assn.	SUPERSEDES ORDER #: N/A	

Purpose: The probability of encountering a Methamphetamine Lab has increased drastically within our jurisdiction. We are obviously subject to becoming involved by virtue of an emergency response. We must remember however, that we may also become inadvertently involved through an EMS response, during our Bureau of Fire Prevention Inspection program, or by numerous other activities that may place our personnel within someone else's living space. This guideline shall establish a safe and effective procedure to be followed regardless of our method of involvement.

I. Overview

Methamphetamine (METH) is a powerful, highly toxic, addictive drug that is illegally “cooked” in makeshift labs. These labs pose a serious threat to all first responders.

Due to the means of production, these labs present extreme dangers from explosions as well as exposure to hazardous chemicals. We must also remember that these labs are many times protected by deadly booby traps.

Meth Labs can be found in rental homes, garages, storage sheds, vacant buildings, vehicles, apartments, mobile homes, motel rooms etc. Some outward warning signs that you may be entering a lab include: a strong odor of solvents, blacked out or covered windows, fences, padlocked gates or doors, guard dogs or the presence of things uncommon to your normal surroundings. Some of these would include: plastic tubing, mason jars, propane tanks (sometimes burnt or spray-painted with bent or tampered valves), hotplates, lab equipment, gas cans, funnels, blenders, pails/buckets, camp stove fuel, anhydrous ammonia, ether (starter fluid), coffee filters, funnels, rock salt, iodine, lithium batteries, hydrogen peroxide, ephedrine (cold tablets) or pseudoephedrine (cold tablets), alcohol (isopropyl or rubbing), Toluene (brake cleaner), muriatic acid, sodium hydroxide (lye), and red phosphorus(matches/road flares).

It is critical that we pay attention to our surroundings and be alert for things out of the ordinary.

II. Method of Involvement

A. Accidental Discovery

If any personnel should suspect they have entered a possible Meth lab while on responding to a call or by any other activity that may place us inside someone else's space, they shall not attempt to mitigate the situation. Do not question or allude to anything that may tip the person or persons off to the fact you suspect Meth production may be in progress. Do not touch or move anything that isn't necessary, finish your assignment, leave, and immediately follow the chain-of-command and notify a company officer.

B. Fire Response

If while on a fire scene it is determined that a Meth Lab is involved we shall immediately cease all interior firefighting activity. Serious consideration should also be given to personnel placement outside the structure due to the possible presence of pressurized vessels being used in the Meth production. Explosion hazards could exist. Through the chain-of -command, law enforcement shall be notified immediately. Every attempt should be made to prevent run-off from entering waterways or storm drains. The decision to continue a defensive fire attack shall be based on current factors and shall be at the Incident Commanders discretion. If it is determined or suspected that any personnel has been exposed to the products of Meth production, they shall be decontaminated using standard decon procedures. All clothing and / or PPE should be red- bagged on the scene. The haz-mat team should be activated.

C. Haz-Mat Response to Known Condition

Response to a known Methamphetamine Lab shall be considered a hazardous materials incident. The scene is a crime scene and shall be treated as such. Law enforcement activities will be concentrated on the “Hot Zone”. Our involvement will be limited to activities outside the identified “Hot Zone” These activities will include, but not be limited to, air monitoring, and decontamination.

III. Toms River Fire Department Lab Entry

- A. Toms River Fire Department personnel will not participate in any law enforcement agency entry into a known and unsecured drug lab. Personnel may make an entry into a secured lab if an emergency situation involving hazardous materials develops, and if the safety of said personnel is not placed in undo jeopardy.

- B. Product Disposal

In compliance with 49 CFR 925, the Toms River Fire Department will not remove or dispose of any hazardous materials associated with a Methamphetamine laboratory. The disposal is the responsibility of the law enforcement agency making the seizure.