

KENT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING CLANDESTINE METHAMPHETAMINE LABS

Introduction

Michigan Senate Bill No. 648, which is an Act to amend Public Act 167 of 1917, will take effect on April 1, 2004. This Act will require state or local law enforcement agencies to notify the Kent County Health Department and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality of any property or dwelling within Kent County that has been the site of illegal drug manufacturing. Within 14 days of this notification, the Kent County Health Department, in cooperation with the MDEQ, shall make a determination of the suitability of the property or dwelling for human habitation. The Kent County Health Department is required by this legislation to order the property or dwelling vacated until such time that the property owner establishes that the property is decontaminated.

The intent of this legislation is to address the potential health risks associated with inhabiting a dwelling contaminated with the chemical wastes and byproducts of clandestine methamphetamine production. Methamphetamine production and use, once only a West Coast phenomena, has spread rapidly across the rest of the country in recent years. Methamphetamine is also known as, "meth," "speed," "crank," "ice," "tina," "crystal," and "poor man's cocaine" depending upon the geographic region and the demographics of the users. Regardless of whether it is smoked, inhaled, injected, or ingested, it is very dangerous to the user, but even more so to the producer and those inhabiting that property.

Methamphetamine can be produced with supplies readily available at the local pharmacy and hardware store. Common ingredients include, but are not limited to: ephedrine from cold tablets, acetone, isopropyl alcohol, toluene, ether, sulfuric acid, methanol, salt, lithium, anhydrous ammonia, sodium hydroxide, red phosphorus, muriatic acid, iodine, and trichloroethane. These ingredients present a significant explosive and gaseous hazard to the producer as they are "cooked," but they, and their byproducts, also present a health hazard to anyone occupying that dwelling. Chemical residuals throughout the home cause an unacceptable toxic risk to any humans therein.

Procedure

The following procedure shall be utilized by the Kent County Health Department upon receipt of notification of the existence of a clandestine drug manufacturing operation.

1. The notice from law enforcement shall be forwarded to the supervising sanitarian(s) and/or the EH division director.

2. The notice from law enforcement shall serve as prima facie evidence that chemical contamination exists on the premises. Therefore, the supervising sanitarian and/or EH division director shall issue an immediate order of condemnation of the property as unfit for human habitation in accordance with Article VIII of the Housing Regulations for Kent County, Michigan.
3. Occupant(s) shall be ordered to vacate the dwelling immediately.
4. Kent County Health Department staff will post a placard in a conspicuous location on the property bearing the words, "CONDEMNED AS UNFIT FOR HUMAN HABITATION." Kent County Health Department personnel shall not enter the dwelling at any time prior to suitable decontamination.
5. Condemnation order will be rescinded upon receipt of documentation from a Certified Industrial Hygienist that the dwelling has been decontaminated and determined not be a risk to human health. This determination should be made in consideration of the decontamination criteria set forth by the State of Washington until such time that decontamination criteria are established by the State of Michigan or the federal government.

The State of Washington clean up standard web address is:

<http://www.leg.wa.gov/wac/index.cfm?fuseaction=chapterdigest&chapter=246-205>