

waste materials could be concealed, vehicles with windows blocked from view, backseat piles of materials or trash which may conceal chemicals or containers beneath, and vehicles with hijacked electrical wires connected to a nearby building or power pole;

- Other spaces such as storage units, campgrounds, yards, and other areas where cooking, storage, and/or waste disposal could have occurred, and suspect materials could be concealed;
- An appearance of clutter, trash, run-down buildings and vehicles, dirty conditions;
- Unusual and/or tampered wiring in and around a building or vehicle that simply does not make sense;
- Fire damage;
- Evidence of booby traps including wiring, warning signs, spotlights, motion detectors, security systems and antennas;
- Streetlight bulbs broken or not working;
- Excessive and unusual window coverings, locks, fencing, reinforced doors and gates, aggressive warning signs of guard dog or other threatening nature, and other indicators of apparently extreme privacy needs;
- Unusual amount of foot traffic for the location;
- Staining and dead vegetation around drains and plumbing features, surface water drainages, ditches and pavement;
- Evidence of unregistered underground storage tanks, suspicious septic tanks, waste oil pits, evidence of naphtha (mothball) product and/or other volatile organic compounds in structures, soils, and drains.

**Closer inspections of suspicious places and waste piles should involve checking for:**

- Abandoned piles of trash in places not likely to be serviced by trash disposal service;
- Contents of dumpsters and trash receptacles in suspect neighborhoods;
- Chemical odors including cat urine, ammonia, acetone, fuel, naphtha, volatile organic compounds, and others;
- Trash bags, boxes, drums, and other containers with uncertain contents, cat litter bags and

especially bulging bags with suspected gas contents;

- Propane bottles and other containers with improvised tubing and/or blue staining;
- Taped-up bulging garbage bags with possible gas contents;
- Drug paraphernalia such as syringes, pipes, straws, vials, baggies, white powder;
- Cold medicine packets (especially Sudafed), boxes, bubble packs;
- Solvents – toluene, xylene, acetone, denatured alcohol, dry cleaning solvent;
- Petroleum distillates (paint thinner, white gas, kerosene);
- Corrosives (acids, bases) of many types and concentrations;
- Chemical mixtures including separated liquids;
- Metals (sulfur, iodine, lithium batteries, red, blue, or white phosphorus);
- Fertilizer such as anhydrous ammonia;
- Epsom salt, table salt;
- Matches and match books with missing striker plates;
- Pornographic materials;
- Unusual fanning devices.

**If you see any of the indicators listed above:**

- Are the chemicals present in a variety and in quantities beyond what would be normal for household or garage use?
- Are the chemicals accompanied by full and/or bulging garbage bags, unlabelled containers, and staining?
- Are incompatible chemicals stored together, such as acids and bases?
- Do chemicals appear to be improperly or carelessly stored, or improperly labeled?
- Is there an appearance of carelessness, such as dirty or chaotic conditions, fire extinguishers which are modified, improvised, or discolored, clutter, incompatible or unexpected materials, or other suspicious appearance to the site that does not seem appropriate for an apparent legitimate site use?

**Do you see evidence of cooking of unusual mixtures using unconventional methods and in unconventional locations:**

- Laboratory or improvised glassware, hoods, hot plates, camp stoves, clamps;
- Unusual blue, red, white, blue-green, and other stains on cookware and cooking devices, propane bottles, containers, counter surfaces, and flooring;
- Stained cookware which may be conventional (such as pots, pans, and pressure cookers) and improvised (cans, metal containers, glassware, and others);
- Stained coffee filters or other unusual filtering devices;
- Improvised chemistry lab in a kitchen, bathroom, back yard, garage, basement, storage shed, vehicle seat or trunk, motel room, disposal heap, and many other situations;
- Tubing either stockpiled or stuck into bags, containers, drawers, mattresses, or other air spaces.

**Watch for multiple indicators. Be careful when you approach areas which you suspect to be a meth lab or its products. Call for help.**

**STAY ALERT  
AND  
STAY ALIVE.**

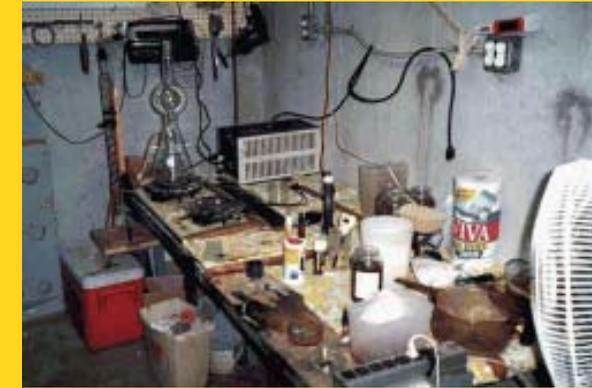
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**What Is the  
Meth Lab ISA  
Checklist?**



# Meth Lab ISA Checklist

The purpose of this Meth Lab Initial Site Assessment (ISA) Checklist is to provide Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) staff a written list of situations and materials they should be watching for to avoid and properly handle the dangers of clandestine methamphetamine labs and their products, during routine work on proposed and existing CDOT properties.

Clandestine methamphetamine laboratories (meth labs) are an increasing threat to CDOT projects and highways, and to CDOT employees, volunteers, contractors, consultants, law enforcement officers, and other potential first responders. The labs create toxic and deadly situations and wastes in large quantities, and they are proliferating. These labs contain toxic and flammable materials placed in unstable conditions, mixtures, and improper containers that can harm and kill unsuspecting intruders. They can severely affect CDOT's staff safety, as well as the liability and cost of maintenance and right-of-way planning efforts.

Meth labs and wastes can be present in urban and rural areas and in unexpected places. They can be found in many settings, both public and private. They are found on public land, right-of-way easements, and other government-owned parcels of local, state, and federal jurisdiction.

**CDOT Environmental and Right-of-Way staff** are most likely to encounter meth labs and wastes during project reconnaissance for property acquisition. CDOT staff may find previous and active meth labs, manufactured drugs, waste materials, and the people that make and use them, during an Initial Site Assessment, Phase I Modified Environmental Site Assessment, and Phase II Site Investigation.

**CDOT Maintenance staff** are most likely to encounter meth labs and products during routine roadside activities such as mowing, storm drain and

culvert cleaning, Adopt-A-Highway and other trash collection, and rest stop operations. These operations may encounter discarded materials and vehicles in ditches, turnouts, and downhill slopes, mobile labs in parked vehicles or set up in a low-visibility portion of a facility, liquid and non-liquid wastes in restroom facilities, septic systems, storm and sewage drains, portable toilets, waste receptacles, and the ground. Encountered labs and wastes during roadside and facility operations and Adopt-A-Highway operations can expose workers and volunteers to deadly chemicals.

**When you first encounter active meth labs, your health and safety are at risk.** Many meth lab operators utilize explosives, booby traps, and illegal firearms to deter intruders. CDOT workers who enter these labs also risk inhaling, ingesting, and touching toxic materials found in both previous and active labs. They then carry the poisonous residues away from the site on their shoes, hands, and clothing back to their workplaces and homes, thus potentially exposing their work peers, families, and the public.

When CDOT acquires a meth lab, the agency becomes responsible for decontaminating affected features in the structures and natural media. A qualified CDOT-approved remediation contractor needs to do the site reconnaissance and remediation. Such contractors follow thorough health and safety procedures, and remediate the site to regulatory requirements as required by Colorado meth lab cleanup laws. Certification for re-occupancy will be needed by the local Governing Authority if the building will be reoccupied. It is common that buildings and contents will be more expensive to remediate than simply to demolish. Also, if meth lab wastes have been illicitly disposed into sanitary sewer lines, storm drains, and/or septic systems, the residues in these structures require remediation as well.

The cost and liability of these cleanups are high. **CDOT intends to avoid the acquisition of meth labs or require remediation prior to acquisition by responsible parties whenever possible.**

## Resources

If you confirm or strongly suspect the presence of a meth lab or waste materials, you may contact:

- Local law enforcement agency (911);
- CDPHE 24-hour spill line (1-877-518-5608)

Additional resources include:

- CDOT Property Management for both help and a list of CDOT-approved contractors at 303-512-5519
- CDOT Environmental Programs Branch at 303-757-9259
- CDPHE meth lab website at: <http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/hm/methlab.asp>.



## ISA Checklist for Methamphetamine Laboratories

### Introduction

The presence of meth labs typically can be revealed from a distance by a group of indicators. **If you encounter more than a few of the following listed indicators**, it may be appropriate to assume there is, or is likely to be, a meth lab and/or its residue. If so, the site is a crime scene. Leave immediately, decontaminate yourself if exposed (wash affected clothing, footwear, and skin), and call for help.

### Records Search

During ISA records search, check public records for documented methamphetamine laboratory (meth lab) busts at and near the project area. Check the spills database at CDPHE (303-692-3429) and, where available, records at law enforcement agencies, local drug task force offices, local health department, local fire department, local building department, and other public offices with applicable records. Check for parcels determined by fair market value to be “uneconomic remainders” where the original land use has been substantially diminished, the parcel is retained/owned and maintained by government authority for environmental preservation, recreational purpose, or other purpose. Other possible settings include mixed land use, prescription drug outlets, retail/wholesale outlets that sell pseudoephedrine or large quantities of pre-cursor products. It may be appropriate to read between the lines, looking for repeat incidents which deal with drug and fire-related incidents and incidents of a suspicious nature. Discussions with neighbors might be helpful if available and seems comfortable.

### Initial Site Reconnaissance

During initial site reconnaissance, never enter a building which has the potential of housing a current or previous meth lab. Check the facility from a distance until you are comfortable that you are not in any danger before approaching or entering the property. Bring binoculars and a camera with a zoom lens as part of your site reconnaissance gear. Survey the property from a safe distance and where you are not obvious. If necessary, drive in a non-CDOT vehicle to avoid suspicion. Take thorough notes of any observations and interviews and take plenty of photographs to review later.

### Look for:

- Enclosed buildings including homes, apartments, motels, hotels, garages, barns, warehouses, office buildings, basements, makeshift structures, and others;
- Abandoned or suspicious vehicles which may or may not be street-legal, including cars, mobile homes, recreational vehicles, and others with trunks or other enclosed spaces in which lab or