

Ventilation system

Ventilation systems (heating, air conditioning) tend to collect fumes and dust and redistribute them throughout a home. The vents, ductwork, and filters can become contaminated. It is recommended to replace all of the air filters in the system, remove and clean vents, clean the surfaces (such as walls and ceilings) near system inlets and outlets, and clean the system's ductwork.

Plumbing

Sinks, drains, tubs and toilets are frequently used for the disposal of waste products generated during the meth manufacturing process. These waste products can collect in drains, traps, and septic tanks and give off fumes. If a strong chemical odor is coming from household plumbing or if you suspect the septic tank or yard may be contaminated, do not attempt to address the problem yourself. Contact an environmental clean up contractor or your local health department.



**Have questions or need more information?
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Remember these steps to cleaning a former meth property:

1. *Consult with a certified environmental clean up contractor, if warranted.*
2. *Contact your local law enforcement agency to determine what chemicals were present on the property.*
3. *Thoroughly air out the property before and during cleanup.*
4. *Remove all unnecessary items and dispose of them.*
5. *Remove visibly contaminated items or items that have an odor.*
6. *Clean all surfaces using household cleaning methods and proper personal protection.*
7. *Clean the ventilation system.*
8. *Leave plumbing cleaning to the experts.*
9. *Air out the property for three to five days.*
10. *If odor or staining remains, have your home evaluated by a professional.*

Guidelines for Cleaning up Former Methamphetamine Labs



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METHAMPHETAMINE

Methamphetamine (meth) drug labs are not a new hazard to Iowa. In 2003, federal, state and local authorities seized more than 1,100 Iowa labs, and the number of labs seized increases each year. These labs are discovered in houses, apartments, motel rooms, motor vehicles, and even an occasional combine.

Currently there is no official federal guidance or regulations on how to clean up a former meth lab. The Iowa Department of Public Health, Division of Environmental Health, has created these basic guidelines to assist public health officials, property owners and the general public in cleaning up former meth lab properties.

WHY THE CONCERN ABOUT CLEANING UP ILLEGAL METH LABS?

After the bulk of any lab-related debris, such as chemicals and containers has been removed, it is possible that a small amount of contamination may accidentally be inadvertently left on surfaces and in absorbent materials (carpets, furniture), sinks, drains and ventilation systems.

Failure to properly clean former meth lab sites may result in continued exposure of occupants to chemicals. This may cause health or safety problems and may affect the value and future use of property.

IDPH advises property owners to exercise caution and use the safest possible methods for cleaning a former meth lab property and any possible remaining contamination.

The Iowa Department of Public Health believes that the safest way to clean up a former meth lab is to hire an environmental company trained in hazardous substance removal and clean up. Owners who decide to clean properties on their own should be aware that household building materials and furniture may have absorbed contaminants and may give off fumes. Use caution and wear clothing to protect your skin, such as gloves, long sleeves, and eye protection during cleaning.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR CLEANING FORMER METH LABS:

Air out the property

Be sure the property has been aired out for several days before cleaning. Good ventilation should be continued throughout the property's cleanup.

To promote the volatilization (dissolving into the air) of some chemicals, windows and doors may be closed and the temperature inside the home increased to approximately 90 degrees Fahrenheit for a few days. After cleaning and heating is complete, the property should be aired out for three to five days to allow for any volatiles to disperse from the house. Open all windows and set up exhaust fans to circulate air out of the house. During this time, the property should remain off limits unless it is necessary to make short visits.

After the cleaning and final three to five days of airing-out, the property should be checked for re-staining and odors, which would indicate that the initial cleaning was not successful. Additional, more extensive steps will need to be taken to complete the cleaning process.

Contamination removal and disposal

During the meth “cooking” process, spilled chemicals, supplies and equipment may contaminate household items. Remove, double-bag, and properly dispose of any items that are visibly contaminated. Absorbent materials, such as carpeting, drapes, clothing, and furniture can accumulate dust or splattered chemicals. It is recommended these materials be disposed of if odors or staining are present. These contaminated items, if properly double-bagged, may be disposed along with regular household trash.

If you find suspicious containers or lab equipment at the property, do not handle them yourself. Leave the area and contact your local law enforcement agency or fire department.

Surfaces

Surfaces, such as walls, counters, floors, ceilings, etc., are porous and can hold contamination from the meth cooking process, especially in those areas where the active lab existed. Cleaning these areas is very important because of frequent contact, such as in food preparation, with these surfaces. Where appropriate, painting should be considered after cleaning, especially where contamination was found or suspected.

If a surface has visible contamination, staining, or gives off odors, complete removal and replacement of the surface is recommended. This may include removal and replacement of wallboard, floor coverings, and counters.