



OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S CHIEF SCIENCE ADVISOR

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MEDIA RELEASE

Report:

Methamphetamine contamination in residential properties in New Zealand: Exposures, risk levels, and interpretation of standards

Today the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor releases a new report on the health risks of exposure to methamphetamine residues in residential properties. The report was commissioned by Hon Phil Twyford, Minister of Housing and Urban Development.

The report addresses a number of questions including:

- What level of methamphetamine residue on household surfaces, and under what circumstances, might present a health risk to occupants?
- How do risks differ between premises where methamphetamine was manufactured vs where it was smoked, and how does this affect the rationale for testing and remediation?
- What testing and remediation recommendations can be derived from considering the health risk perspective?
- How can these recommendations be best applied in New Zealand, based on what we know about exposures and risks in New Zealand specifically?

These questions were approached from a comprehensive scientific perspective which assessed the overall risks in the New Zealand context. It involved a thorough review of the available scientific and medical literature, and in-depth interviews with a wide range of experts and stakeholders both in New Zealand and internationally.

The key findings of the report are that:

- Methamphetamine manufacture involves a range of hazardous chemicals. The rationale for testing is largely to remove the risk arising from these chemicals.
- Existing acceptable limits for surface methamphetamine residue levels have been established to indicate adequate cleaning of a meth lab site, and are not based on the risk of methamphetamine itself.
- Available data suggest that in general, the level of methamphetamine in New Zealand properties that do test positive is low. Therefore, beyond the risk from chemicals associated with methamphetamine manufacturing, exposure to methamphetamine itself on surfaces confers an extremely low, if not negligible, health risk.
- Testing regimes would be best applied using criteria defined by whether meth lab activity is suspected or not, as in the case of most international jurisdictions.
- In the absence of suspicion of a meth lab, a precautionary approach would be to use a much higher testing level to identify areas contaminated from very high levels of smoking, which might justify cleaning for reassurance purposes. This would still ensure public safety and reduce significant burden on property owners.

The report can also be found [here](#). For further information, contact csa@pmcsa.org.nz.

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