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## NEWS

January 2008

### Meth Cleanup Bill Now Law

The president signed into law Dec. 21 the Methamphetamine Remediation Research Act of 2007, sponsored in the Senate by Max Baucus (D-Mont.) and Gordon Smith (R-Ore.), and in the House by Bart Gordon (D-Tenn.). The bill requires the EPA to develop voluntary health-based cleanup guidelines for counties to use to ensure former meth lab sites are safe and free from contamination.

The bill also launches two research programs: the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) is to develop meth-detection equipment for local enforcement agencies to use to detect active meth labs and measure their contamination levels, and the National Academy of Sciences is to study the long-term health impacts of meth exposure on first responders and children rescued from meth labs.

The measure also directs EPA to work with state and local agencies during all phases of implementation.

“On behalf of the nation’s counties, I want to thank Senator Baucus and my good friend Senator Smith for their leadership on this important legislation,” said Umatilla County, Ore. Commissioner Bill Hansell. “Methamphetamine abuse continues to destroy families and is costing county governments and taxpayers millions of dollars.

“The bill is critically important to counties because currently there are no federal standards on cleaning up a former meth lab,” said Hansell, who focused on the meth crisis during his year as NACo president. “As NACo’s five national surveys show, the devastating effects of meth abuse touch nearly every aspect of county government — from the county jails and court systems to the county hospitals and social services departments.”

Some support for cleanup already exists under EPA’s Local Governments Reimbursement Program (LGR). It reimburses local governments up to \$25,000 for costs

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related to temporary emergency measures responding to releases or threatened releases of hazardous substances. The program is intended as a "safety net" for local governments with limited capacity to pay for these response actions. For more information on the LGR program see [Local Governments Reimbursement | Superfund | US EPA](#) (as reported by Paul Beddoe in County News).

## Canadian-Made, Meth-Laced Ecstasy Being Dumped Into U.S. Illegal Drug Markets

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) is warning public health and safety leaders across the country about a dangerous new drug threat coming from Canada. Ecstasy laced with methamphetamine (meth) has been entering the United States illegal drug markets, particularly in northern border states. Intelligence reports indicate that once smuggled into the U.S., the meth-laced Ecstasy is then being distributed throughout the country.

The dangerous poly-drug combination of methamphetamine and Ecstasy can have severe health consequences, especially as both drugs have toxic effects on the brain. They both can interfere with the body's ability to regulate temperature, leading to sharp increases in body temperature (hyperthermia), which can result in liver, kidney, and cardiovascular system failure and death. The potential for a life-threatening or fatal overdose is also increased when meth-laced Ecstasy is combined with alcohol. Recent laboratory research suggests that Ecstasy and meth combinations may produce greater adverse neurochemical and behavioral effects than either drug alone.

John Walters, the Nation's "Drug Czar," said, "This 'Extreme Ecstasy' is a disturbing development in what has been one of the most significant international achievements against the illicit drug trade. Historic progress against Ecstasy availability and use is in jeopardy of being rolled back by Canadian criminal organizations. Desperate to develop their client base, they are dangerously altering a product for which demand by youth and young adults had plummeted, and are exploiting vulnerabilities along our shared border. This is alarming for the youth of both Canada and the United States."

Ecstasy use in the United States rose in the late 1990s with the rise of the 'Rave' culture, however due to the well-coordinated national and international response - Ecstasy use in the U.S. diminished in the early 2000s. In fact, the U.S. witnessed a 54 percent reduction since 2001 in the number of United States teens using Ecstasy in the past month, however recent data show progress against the drug has ebbed. The number of people in the U.S. who reported that they tried Ecstasy for the first time during the past year increased 40 percent between 2005 and 2006 – from 615,000 to 860,000. One-third of these new users in 2006 were under age 18 when they started using Ecstasy.

And while still lower than its peak in 2002, past-month Ecstasy use has been increasing over the last two years among young adults aged 18-25. An estimated 326,000 young adults reported past-month Ecstasy use in 2006, compared to 231,000 in 2004. These increases coincide with increased trafficking of Ecstasy from Canada. Additionally, the latest Monitoring the Future Study, which tracks teen attitudes and behavior with respect to drug use, found decreases in the perception of risk of taking Ecstasy occasionally among 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders (-7% and -4%, respectively). After years of increased perception of risk for Ecstasy use, today's young people are not getting the message that Ecstasy use is dangerous and potentially deadly.

Prior to 2003, Europe (primarily The Netherlands and Belgium) was the predominant source of Ecstasy consumed in the United States. Increased cooperation among U.S. and European governments, combined with improved law enforcement operations and mass media reports, effectively dismantled the European-U.S. Ecstasy trade. However, U.S. and Canadian intelligence reports indicate that Canada-based drug trafficking organizations are attempting to fill the supply void, and have drastically increased their Ecstasy production and trafficking.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) estimates that the current combined production capacity of Canadian Ecstasy laboratories exceeds 2 million tablets per week. Federal, State, and local law enforcement agencies along the U.S.-Canada border report large increases in the flow of Ecstasy from Canada into the United States. In 2003, 568,220 dosage units of Ecstasy

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were seized federally in the ten Northern border states; in 2006, 5,485,619 dosage units were seized.

Alarming, more than 55 percent of the Ecstasy samples seized in the United States last year contained methamphetamine. Cutting their product with less-expensive methamphetamine boosts profits for Canadian Ecstasy producers, likely increases the addictive potential of their product, and effectively gives a dangerous "face lift" to a designer drug that had fallen out of fashion with young American drug users.

Federal law enforcement officers are working with the RCMP to put greater pressure on Canadian Ecstasy producers through increased intelligence sharing and coordinated enforcement operations, and RCMP officials are focusing their efforts on the importation of precursor chemicals used in drug production. In the meantime, Director Walters is urging State and local public health officials to reinvigorate their prevention efforts, to enhance educational outreach to youth, parents, school systems, emergency departments, medical examiners, poison control centers, and law enforcement agencies regarding the hazards of Ecstasy and methamphetamine, to shore up treatment systems to look for and address the unique and well known challenges of meth addiction.

"We cannot allow our young people to once again be victimized by the 'Rave' culture, 'designer' drugs, or the myth that drug use is safe," said Director Walters. "We cannot afford to be complacent with the progress made against Ecstasy since 2001. Just as we must teach new generations of children to read, we must continue to educate new generations of young people on the harms of drug use (as reported by the [Office of National Drug Control Policy](#) on January 3, 2008)."

## **Meth Overdose Causes Severe Brain Injury**

The effects of a methamphetamine overdose are very similar to those seen after a traumatic brain injury, according to researchers who examined the effects of "club drugs" in rats.

"We showed that a single overdose of meth can be as damaging as a head-on motor vehicle collision in the

brain," co-author Matthew Warren, of the University of Florida in Gainesville, told Reuters Health.

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive stimulant that is chemically related to amphetamine, but is more potent and more harmful to the central nervous system.

Warren and his associates analyzed changes in the proteins in rodents' brains after traumatic injury and decided to investigate whether methamphetamine and MDMA, also known as Ecstasy, might cause similar changes.

MDMA is a psychoactive drug that is chemically similar to methamphetamine and the hallucinogen mescaline. The results of animal studies have also shown it has toxic effects on the nervous system.

The researchers presented their findings at the Society for Neuroscience's conference in San Diego last month.

The researchers studied "cytoskeletal" proteins, which make up the cellular skeleton of the brain responsible for holding the organ together, Warren explained.

About 12 percent of the proteins in an area of the rodents' brains known as the cortex showed the same changes after a methamphetamine overdose and a traumatic brain injury. When the researchers looked at the effects of an MDMA overdose, they found damage in the hippocampus, the region of the brain involved in memory formation.

"These data and the previous 4 years of research suggest some drugs, especially methamphetamine, cause changes that are not readily reversible," principal investigator Dr. Mark Gold, at the University of Florida's McKnight Brain Institute, said in a press release. "Future research is necessary for us to determine when or if methamphetamine-related brain changes reverse themselves (as reported by [Reuters Health](#) on Dec. 11, 2007)."

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## Legislative Update

### Methamphetamine Production Prevention Act of 2007

May 3, 2007, Senator Durbin introduced S. 1276, which would establish a grant program to facilitate the creation of methamphetamine precursor electronic logbook systems. It has been referred to the Judiciary Committee and has eleven cosponsors. Senator Durbin's staff are working with Chairman Leahy's staff to resolve some of the Chairman's concerns about privacy protections in the bill. They indicate that the bill may be ready to move through the Judiciary Committee next year. We are seeking co-sponsors, particularly on the minority side.

June 15, 2007, Representative Ellison introduced H.R. 2747. It has been referred to the Energy and Commerce Committee and the Judiciary Committee Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security. It has eighteen cosponsors.

### Combat Methamphetamine Enhancement Act of 2007

September 19, 2007, Senator Feinstein introduced S. 2071 which strengthens provisions originally in the Combat Meth Act to: (1) require all regulated sellers and persons dealing in meth precursors to file self-certifications with the A.G. as spelled out in the Combat Meth Act; (2) require the A.G. to publish a list of all self-certified persons on the website of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA); (3) restrict distributors of listed chemicals from selling to individuals other than self-certified regulated sellers or persons; and (4) impose penalties for negligent failure to self-certify. The bill is before the Judiciary Committee and has 29 co-sponsors, including the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders.

### Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant

The SAPT Block Grant has been cut by approximately \$20 million over the last three years (a cut of \$3,591,280

in FY 2005; a cut of \$16,973,720 in FY 2006 and level funding in FY 2007). In addition to these cuts, inflationary costs have added strain to the publicly funded system. For FY 2008, the SAPT Block Grant has been appropriated for \$1.76 billion, the same level as FY 2007.

## Studies/Reports

### National Methamphetamine Threat Assessment 2008

*National Drug Intelligence Center*

[The National Methamphetamine Threat Assessment 2008](#) is a national-level strategic assessment of methamphetamine trafficking in the United States. This assessment addresses significant trends in methamphetamine production, transportation, distribution, and abuse. It discusses a wide range of issues, including methamphetamine production in Mexico, the increasing availability of Mexican ice methamphetamine in domestic drug markets, and apparent methamphetamine shortages in some western markets. This assessment draws upon the National Drug Threat Assessment 2008, regional drug intelligence products prepared by the National Drug Intelligence Center, and reporting from numerous federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

### Monitoring the Future Data Tables

*National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and the University of Michigan*

These data tables present results of the [2007 Monitoring the Future Study](#), which provides information about substance use, including methamphetamine use, among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders.

## Funding

### Methamphetamine Initiative Grant Program 2007 Recipient List

*Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), September 2007.* This listing highlights the award

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recipients of [COPS' 2007 Methamphetamine Initiative Grant Program](#).

## Events/Training Opportunities

### ASAP 2008 Annual Industry and Technology Issues Conference

[American Society for Automation in Pharmacy \(ASAP\)](#).

Date: January 24-26, 2008. Location: Amelia Island, Florida.

This conference will include information on the tracking of pseudoephedrine purchases to prevent methamphetamine production.

### Meth Space: The New Danger to Children

[Multijurisdictional Counterdrug Task Force Training \(MCTFT\)](#) and the Florida National Guard. Date: February 21, 2008. Location: online.

This free satellite broadcast will focus on the dangers and health effects that meth and meth labs pose to children found in meth using or producing environments.

The purpose of this monthly electronic newsletter is to provide county officials, administrators, criminal justice and mental health professionals, and other interested parties relevant information on the nation's methamphetamine problem. Information is gathered from many sources each month through a grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance.

*If you have questions or comments regarding the content of this newsletter, please send a message to [jcarmody@naco.org](mailto:jcarmody@naco.org).*

The National Association of Counties (NACo) is the only national organization that represents county governments in the United States. Founded in 1935, NACo provides essential services to the nation's 3,066 counties. NACo advances issues with a unified voice before the federal government, improves the public's understanding of county government, assists counties in finding and sharing innovative solutions through education and research, and provides value-added services to save counties and taxpayers money. For more information about NACo, visit [www.naco.org](http://www.naco.org).