



Spokane County



Meth Watch Program

WHAT IS METH WATCH?

The Spokane County Meth Action Team and the Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council (GSSAC) felt an urgent need to help curtail drug lab activity by making the theft or purchase of precursor ingredients more difficult. The Washington Meth Watch Program was modeled after a program designed by the Kansas Department of Health, Kansas Bureau of Investigation, and a team of Kansas retailers; they have generously shared their program with us.

If you have noticed the increase in theft or large quantity purchases of precursor products, your store is likely, and involuntarily, contributing to the deadly meth problem in Washington. Participation in Meth Watch aims to decrease theft and the likelihood of meth "cookers" viewing your store as a supplier in drug production. Since inception, it has grown from a core group of retailers using signage, educating employees, and reporting suspicious activity, to a broad membership of businesses linked together to prevent theft, fraud, and abuse in our community.

We encourage any business that sells precursors or experiences drug related theft, fraud, or abuse to become a member. Thank you to the businesses that have led this effort in Spokane County and been a model for Washington State.

Spokane County Initial Members:

Safeway, Yoke's Foods, Albertsons, Rosauers, Securitas Security Services, Inc., Tidymans, and Rite Aid.

LEAD AGENCIES:

- Spokane County Meth Action Team
- Spokane County Sheriff's Office
- Spokane Police Department

SUPPORTING AGENCIES:

- Spokane County SCOPE
- Spokane City COPS
- The Better Business Bureau of Eastern Washington, Northern Idaho, and Montana
- Comet Press

COORDINATED BY:

Greater Spokane Substance Abuse Council (GSSAC)
(509)922-8383
8104 E Sprague Ave
Spokane, WA 99212
Gssacpreventioncenter.com

INITIALLY FUNDED BY:

- Washington State Patrol
- Northwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA)
- WA State Meth Initiative

Meth prevention takes TEAMWORK!

WHAT ARE "PRECURSORS"?

Meth is made using readily available products obtained from retail, convenience, grocery, granges, automotive, and veterinary supply stores. Over-the-counter cold and allergy medications often contain ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, the most critical ingredient in the production of methamphetamine. The manufacturing process also uses ingredients such as lithium batteries, acetone, starter fluid, drain cleaner, rock or table salt, lye, matchbooks, rubbing alcohol, muriatic acid, and gasoline additives. As you can see, these items are available in many stores and most are probably found in your house or garage.

Anhydrous ammonia is another precursor commonly used in the meth process. It is usually stolen from tanks located on farms and ag dealer distribution facilities. Anhydrous ammonia is an extremely dangerous chemical, venting to a gas at -28° F. Thieves will commonly damage the valves or hose on the tanks, which can cause a life-threatening situation. If an unsuspecting employee or grower is unaware of the damage to the hose and opens the valve, escaping anhydrous could cause chemical and temperature burns and even result in fatal injury.

The availability of the products needed for producing meth contributes to the growing meth problem in our state. Because meth users become their own drug suppliers by becoming meth "cooks", the dangers associated with the labs themselves increase the urgency of a retailer assistance program.

WHAT ARE THE METH PRECURSORS & EQUIPMENT?

- Ephedrine or Pseudoephedrine (cold or allergy tablets)
- Matches
- Road Flares
- Starter Fluid/Ether
- Isopropyl or Rubbing Alcohol
- Rock or Table Salt
- Sodium Hydroxide/Lye
- Camping Fuel
- Sulfuric Acid (Drain cleaner)
- Acetone
- Gas Additives (Heet)
- Paint Thinner
- Iodine
- Toluene (Brake cleaner)
- MSM (Cutting agent)
- Muriatic Acid
- Anhydrous Ammonia
- Lithium Batteries
- Coffee Filters
- Aluminum Foil
- Assorted Glassware
- Propane Tanks
- Coolers
- Dry Ice



WHAT'S IN IT FOR MEMBERS?

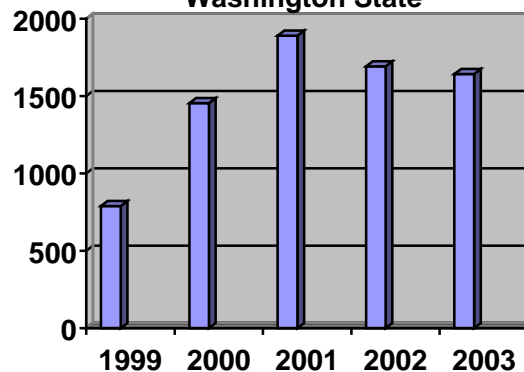
The most common question asked by a business considering signing up for the Washington Meth Watch Program is "How will my business benefit from participating in the Meth Watch Program?" The benefits to your store include a combination of social, economic, and safety factors such as:

SOCIAL: Most citizens of Washington are very concerned about the availability of drugs in their neighborhoods. Helping law enforcement fight the war on drugs provides community awareness for the business owner and their patrons. Membership also allows participants to connect with other retailers, businesses, financial institutions, and law enforcement through meetings, a monthly newsletter, and Email Tree.

ECONOMIC: One of the goals of Meth Watch is to limit the sale or theft of precursors for improper use. Precursors can be easily identified by shelf stickers under the products, which will deter cooks from approaching the products due to increased awareness of the illegal use of these products. The precursors not limited due to sale restrictions or product management will still be identified, making employees and customers another pair of eyes for your store. The increased awareness by business employees, patrons, and the meth "cooks" will hopefully reduce theft and large quantity purchases, as well as fraud and abuse.

SAFETY: Meth Watch Program participants believe that customers will feel safer in your store if you take a proactive approach to preventing improper purchases or theft of precursor items. Often meth "cooks" are on a drug-induced high and possibly feeling paranoid, or worse yet, are overly aggressive, making employee and customer safety an issue. Meth Watch hopes to capitalize on the paranoia and make the "cook" want to go elsewhere for the purchase or theft. Strong interaction with local law enforcement, by reporting suspicious activity, also helps provide that sense of safety. Meth Watch strongly supports and encourages the exchange of information with law enforcement officials.

**Clandestine Drug Lab Cleanup
DOE - Spill Response
Washington State**



Increased employee awareness of our state's meth problem will provide your establishment the resources to be a responsible steward and assist in the fight against crime and drugs. Your business will benefit from a more aggressive stance on clandestine drug labs in the state, in addition to the goodwill your involvement will produce in the community.

WHAT DOES THE METH WATCH PROGRAM INVOLVE?

What's next? You have decided that the Meth Watch Program could have a positive influence on your business and community – CONGRATULATIONS AND WELCOME TO THE TEAM! The Meth Watch Program has many options to choose from, with selection of options depending on the type of business, layout, manpower, etc. The main areas of the program include: employee training, signage, and suspicious activity reporting.

TRAINING POSTER: A **training poster** placed in employee break rooms will provide repeated exposure to the types of products that are commonly purchased or stolen by a meth “cook.”

COMMUNITY AWARENESS PRESENTATION: Upon request, one hour presentations are available, which provide general information regarding meth use, production, prevention, treatment, child endangerment, etc.

SIGNAGE: The Meth Watch Program focuses on creating an awareness of why certain products, or a variety of products, are stolen or purchased in abnormally high quantities. **Window stickers** greet patrons at the door, identifying your participation in Meth Watch and raising their awareness. Placement of **shelf stickers** help store employees and the general public become more familiar with these products. Paranoid meth “cooks” will not want people watching them linger around these target products. **Cash register stickers** are placed at the checkout counter as a final reminder that this store is aware of the meth problem. The stickers also remind the checkout clerk to be on the lookout for suspicious purchases. The Washington Team members believe that the signage serves the dual purpose of putting criminals on notice and letting good customers know your store is taking steps to reduce the use and production of meth in your community through strong community partnerships and proactive involvement.

PRODUCT MANAGEMENT: Product management addresses the strategic placement of precursor products in areas that will help deter theft or suspicious purchases of large quantities. Customers will often question why the products are not readily available. In most cases, a brief explanation of Meth Watch by handing them an **informational “tear-off” sheet** will satisfy their questions and typically will result in their strong support for the program. Some strategic management practices include the following:

- **Limit the quantity of precursor products available on the shelf.** This should reduce the amount of theft or excessive purchases. Many stores already implement this policy. It may cause a higher frequency of restocking, but typically reduces the large rate of theft.
- **Limit the quantity of precursor products that may be purchased.** Limiting the purchase quantity means that a customer will only be able to purchase a certain amount of the product at the checkout counter.
- **Placement of precursor products near high traffic areas.** Placing products at the end of an aisle near the checkout counters, customer service, or a pharmacy helps deter theft. Thieves do not like to be observed stealing products, so they will be more likely to stay away from the high profile areas.
- **Provide surveillance on precursor product aisles.** Providing video surveillance of the products and informing the customer that the aisle is under surveillance is also a deterrent to theft.
- **Placement of product behind a service counter.** When precursor products are behind the counter in a pharmacy, customer service area, or cash register, the customer must ask for the product. Typically, a shelf tag is left on the main shelf area and includes product name, price, and barcode, and directs the customer to the service counter for purchase.

REPORTING SUSPICIOUS TRANSACTIONS: Meth “cooks” can be dangerous when they come to a facility for more ingredients or with the intent to commit a crime. Paranoia and aggressiveness caused by a drug-induced high can cause the “cook” to become angry if confronted about a theft or improper purchase. Meth Watch recommends that employees **do not** confront the suspect, but instead follow through with the transaction rather than putting themselves in danger. When the suspect leaves the store, the clerk or manager should complete a Suspicious Transaction Report and provide the information to local law enforcement as soon as possible. If surveillance footage is available, please note the date and time on the report. The statewide reporting number is **1-888-609-6384**. The Meth Watch program strongly encourages working closely with local law enforcement agencies to create a working relationship that can benefit your store and community.



Meth Watch Program Decals Available As:

- 4"x7" Window Stickers
- 2"x3" Stickers
- 8.5"x11" Outdoor Stickers



Meth Watch Customer Information Pads:

4"x5" tear-off sheets can be kept at each check out location to improve awareness and recognition that your business supports the fight against meth in their community.