Subject:	CLANDESTINE DRUG LABS
Section:	PPG# 4400.54
Chapter:	Operations
Effective Date:	11/12/2015

1.0 POLICY

- **1.1** It is the policy of McLane Black Lake Fire Department that Firefighters shall be trained in the recognition of clandestine drug labs, the potential exposure hazards and decontamination procedures.
- **1.2** The department will work to heighten the awareness of our members to the growing problems associated with clandestine drug labs.
- **1.3** Procedures are established herein to provide for the handling of clandestine drug labs incidents and to enhance the safety of firefighters and the public.

2.0 **DEFINITIONS**

- 2.1 Clandestine Laboratory. A clandestine laboratory is a covert or secret illegal operation that produces a controlled substance through the synthesis of raw chemicals. This is accomplished through the use of specific laboratory glassware and apparatus or "makeshift cooking" pots, depending on the sophistication of the operation. Ten years ago the clandestine laboratory problem was relatively modest, but it has been growing at an alarming rate.
- **2.2 Precursor.** A raw material of a controlled substance that becomes part of the finished product. Pseudoephedrine is the common raw material needed for methamphetamine.
- **2.3 Reflux**. Process of repeatedly heating and condensing vapors in a reaction vessel to cause to flow back or return. Used to increase purity and/or yield in a reaction.
- **2.4 Solvent**. Does not react chemically with a precursor or reagent and does not become part of the finished product. Solvents are used to dissolve solid precursors or reagent, to dilute reaction mixtures, and to separate and purify other chemicals.
- **2.5 Potential Exposure**. Probable exposure due to proximity of chemical agents.
- **2.6 Known Exposure**. Direct exposure to chemical agents.

3.0 RESPONSIBILITIES

- **3.1** The Incident Commander, upon recognizing the presence of a clandestine drug laboratory shall:
 - a) Establish command uphill and upwind.
 - b) Secure the scene and deny entry (Fire Personnel to assist).
 - c) Consider potential ignition sources.
 - d) Establish safety zones
 - e) Consider travel of smoke in the immediate area, move the public and Firefighters out of any smoke or vapor plumes that may have been generated from the fire or explosion.
 - f) Evacuate the structure (apartment houses, condos, etc.).
 - g) In larger complexes evaluate the potential for exposure/harm. to determine the size of the area to be evacuated. Options may be floor of origin or exposures on both sides and above and below the room of origin.
 - h) Consider the need to shelter in place, in larger structures, or downwind structures.
 - i) Once the fire has been extinguished, have an investigator confirm if a lab is present.
 - j) Allow only a minimal number of fire fighters to re-enter the structure to extinguish hot spots and limit activity in lab or contaminated areas
 - k) Establish a decon area and decon team, perform decon as appropriate.
 - 1) Secure the scene before turning it over to a responsible party. Inform responsible party of drug lab presence.

4.0 **PROCEDURES**

- **4.1** Personnel responding to a drug overdose or persons exhibiting unusual behavior shall use extreme caution when dealing with the user or potential user of methamphetamine. They can react violently to stress, whether real or imagined.
- 4.2 The recognition of the presence of a clandestine drug laboratory that is involved in a fire

may not occur until after fire control has been achieved. Members suspecting a drug laboratory (a) (b) shall immediately notify the Incident Commander.

- a) The color of the flames appear to be an unusually bright or dark orange, or the flames may be of several different colors. An unusual color of smoke or odor may also be present.
- b) A laboratory fire can spread faster and bum with more intensity that what might normally be expected.
- **4.3** In a suspect situation, nothing shall be moved, shut off, turned on, or touched, at a laborate Shutting off the water supply to a cooking process can result in an explosion.
- 4.4 Companies discovering a drug lab due to fire or explosion shall:
 - a) Evacuate civilians from the structure and any exposures
 - b) Extinguish the fire or withdraw (based on extent and size of fire)
 - c) Provide as minimal overhaul as is necessary to prevent a rekindle.
 - d) Withdraw fire crews from contaminated areas as soon as practical.
 - e) Notify Dispatch to call PD of a possible drug lab.
- 4.5 Clandestine Labs (no fire)
 - a) If a clandestine lab is discovered by other means, do not turn any power on or off. This includes lights, electric or electronic equipment, and mechanical devices (example of mechanical would be turning off water that may be supplying a reflux condenser in a laboratory engaged in "cooking").
 - b) Evacuate fire crews from the area.
 - c) Notify the on shift Response Chief
 - d) Notify dispatch for PD notification.
 - e) Call for a HAZMAT response.
 - f) Withdraw, secure the scene, establish safety zones, and deny entry.
- **4.6** Decontamination procedures
 - **4.6.1** Once the scene has been established as being a clandestine lab, any personnel that were in close proximity to the fire, smoke, or unidentified liquids shall be decontaminated.

- **4.6.2** Potential Exposure of PPE or Equipment: If personnel were in close proximity to the fire, should also be washed before leaving the scene. Personnel performing the decon shall take precautions to avoid cross contamination by wearing Tyvek coveralls and latex gloves (See 4.7 below).
- **4.6.3** Confirmed Exposure of Personnel, PPE or Equipment: Personnel should have their contaminated clothing removed and bagged for decon at a later time. Personnel should be emergency field deconned with a continuous flow of water in an attempt to remove or dilute the contaminant. Some form of shelter shall be established to secure privacy for the person being decontaminated.
- **4.6.4** When returning to the station either remove bunker gear prior to getting into apparatus or use a steel plastic sack to cover the apparatus seat. After arriving at the station clean PPE with soap, water and a scrub brush then rinse out completely using the apparatus floor hose (rinse water can go into the floor drains). After rinsing wash the clothing in your wash machine. After cleaning PPE in the washer run the washer through a cycle with soap and no clothing to decontaminate the washer.
- **4.7** Personnel performing decon shall take precautions to avoid cross contamination by wearing Tyvek coveralls when available and latex gloves. At a minimum, personnel shall wear full turnouts, SCBA and medical gloves. Avoid splashes and overspray to the extent possible.
- **4.8** Following emergency decon, medical monitoring, treatment and transportation as appropriate, shall be performed.
- **4.9** Recall that some of the chemicals used in the manufacture of methamphetamine are water or air reactive. Opening a hose line and blasting everything in site could potentially breach or knock over a container, resulting in additional chemicals being released and exposing personnel. While extinguishing the fire, use minimum amounts of water and be aware of your target. Minimize glassware breakage and stay out of any spilled liquids, solids, or vapor plumes. Look around the room and observe surroundings before opening a hose line, checking for extension, or beginning overhaul.

5.0 GUIDELINES

- **5.1** Illegal Drug labs can be located anywhere but typically are associated with rental property. They may be small and portable (contained in a box, cooler, or gym bag) or larger and more complex. Typical locations are rental units (houses, apts. motel rooms), vehicles, and storage lockers.
- 5.2 Indicators that a Drug Lab may be present:
 - **5.2.1** Fires that occur in the early morning hours.
 - **5.2.2** Fires involving rental property, tenants/occupants have left the scene prior to or

shortly after your arrival.

- **5.2.3** Neighbors reporting to you that the tenants ran out of the house as it was burning and now tenants are gone.
- **5.2.4** Neighbors tell you the place is a drug house or a lot of traffic at all hours of the day and night.
- **5.3** Visual Indicators of a potential lab include the following:
 - **5.3.1** Unusual amounts of over-the-counter drug containers (precursor), i.e.. Pseudobronchodialators, decongestants.
 - **5.3.2** Excessive amounts of solvent or acid containers with these typical contents % Ether, acetone, gasoline, charcoal Coleman fuel, lighter fluid, Aerosol cans of starter fluid, bottles of Heet, denatured alcohol.
 - **5.3.3** Large quantities of matchbooks used for deriving Red Phosphorous.
 - **5.3.4** Red (rust colored) staining on items such as glass containers, coffee filters, etc.
 - **5.3.5** Lithium battery casings (camera batteries) used for lithium metal strips contained inside the battery.
 - **5.3.6** Unusual amounts of laboratory glassware, plastic tubing, measuring scales.
 - **5.3.7** Caustic materials such as Red Devil Lye (drain cleaner) used as a base to neutralize the ph of products.
 - **5.3.8** Drug paraphernalia, such as glass tubing, bongs, butane torch style lighters, I cc syringes and metal spoons.
 - **5.3.9** Heating and cooking sources such as: Flat griddles, microwave ovens in unusual places, hot plates, flasks (various sizes), pressure cookers, propane torches.
 - **5.3.10** Pressure vessels: such as: Fire extinguishers, propane stove or lantern bottles I to 20 gallon pressure containers, large 100 to 150 lb. pressurized gas cylinders.

"Note any discoloration to valving and fitting assembly. Chemicals being contained may chemically attack the container, leaving the container's integrity compromised. For example, anhydrous ammonia attacks the brass fittings on pressure cylinders and turns a bluish-green.

- **5.3.11** Filtration systems: such as large garbage buckets with mesh netting or sheeting to filter meth crystals. Paper coffee filters, Kitty litter: Filter the fumes/gases during the "cook."
- **5.3.12** Exhaust toxic gases through sewer/trap systems.

- **5.3.13** Large amounts of the drug itself during the synthesis process, the meth must be dried. Drying surfaces may have bags of the meth laying out to dry or banging on a clothesline in separate bags, usually in one (1) 1b. Increments.
- **5.3.14** Users of methamphetamine will exhibit unusual behavior. It relieves fatigue, reduces the need to sleep or eat, increases energy and confidence levels, produces a psychological and physical exhilaration, followed by anxiety, nervous behaviors (tweaking), and paranoia. The strong high is followed by a period of depression ("crash"), when the user may sleep for unusually long periods of time. Moreover, users will soon seek to abuse again ("hit") to regain their previous feelings of euphoria. The cycle of ups and downs will repeat over several days, until the user becomes "burned out" or "slammed."
- 5.3.15 The effects of methamphetamine are almost identical to cocaine. The big difference is in the sustained effects of the drug: Cocaine lasts 20-80 minutes and methamphetamine lasts 4-12 hours. Users of methamphetamine will display effects such as: a. Dilated pupils b. Increased pulse rate, BP, and body temperature c. Body tremors d. Anxiety e. Rigid muscle tone f Teeth grinding and missing teeth g. Dry mouth h. Irritability
- **5.3.16** Injection sites if drug has been IV or intramuscularly induced, open sores on arms.
- **5.3.17** Users who are suffering the withdrawal effects of methamphetamine will display depression, irritability, mental confusion, aggressiveness, increased respiration and heartbeat, weight loss, restlessness, poor judgment, paranoia, difficulty in sleeping, defective reasoning, and a strong urge to use again.
- **5.3.18** Users that have been taken into custody need to have vitals monitored on a regular basis. A condition called toxic psychosis can occur. Toxic psychosis or extreme agitation can occur when a user comes down off a "high." This condition can be fatal. Medications are available to treat this condition.
- **5.4** A defensive mode may be appropriate for personnel safety. An alternative is to protect any exposures and allow the fire to bum, providing the products of combustion being generated are not complicating the problem further.

5.5 General Drug Lab Hazards to Fire fighters.

Operators may substitute proper equipment with unsafe items in low budget clandestine laboratory operations. For example, pressure cookers have been substituted for three neck flasks in the initial cooking stage of methamphetamine. Without ventilation, this type of operation can easily generate toxic levels of phosphine gas. Booby traps have been left in place and armed when a lab is abandoned. Opening or moving doors, windows, refrigerator doors, chemical containers, or furniture may be a triggering mechanism for an explosive device or chemical reaction that is lethal. Trip wires made from monofilament fishing line may be strung across doorways, hallways, or across rooms to activate different types of devices.

6.0 **REFERENCES**

WAC 296-305-08000 Appendix A, C NFPA 472 (1997 Edition) -3-2.3.1.2, 3-4 (1) (2) (3) (4), 3-4.1 (3)(4) WAC 296-824