

What about neighbours?

Although gas or aerosol contamination can spread beyond the production or disposal site, it usually stays in the vicinity or is diluted as it disperses over distance. Occasional smells coming from a clan lab property during its operation may indicate a low level of exposure is occurring. After the lab is dismantled there is minimal risk of exposure.

The Department of Environment Regulation should be consulted if waste material has been disposed of in the yard of the clan lab. While some wastes will pose a minimal or very low risk, unreacted chemicals such as ammonium sulphate may pose a risk if exposed to moisture or water. If large volumes of waste have been disposed of at the site and not cleaned up, some ground water contamination is also possible from the seepage or leaching of the waste into the soil.

In the event of a clan lab-related fire or explosion, neighbours may experience some temporary health effects of a nature generally associated with such events (such as coughing). These health effects are unlikely to be linked specifically to the chemicals used in clan labs.

What can be done?

If you find a clan lab:

1. Leave the area immediately - your safety is paramount.
2. Immediately contact WA Police or Crime Stoppers (contact details below).

Remember:

- never touch, taste or smell any chemicals or equipment
- do not attempt to stop the chemical reaction or process

- do not turn any electrical devices such as lights or fans on or off as this may cause an explosion
- do not shut off the water supply to the house
- do not smoke in or around the clan lab
- do not use tools, radios, mobile phones, torches or devices that produce sparks or friction
- do not re-enter the premises.

If concerned about health risks, contact an agency listed under 'Health and clean-up contacts' on the next page.

Emergency and WA Police contacts

Emergency	000
Police assistance	131 444
Emergency (mobile phone)	112
Emergency (hearing impaired)	106
Crime Stoppers	1800 333 000



Health and clean-up contacts

WA Health – Environmental Health Directorate:
Tel: 9388 4999
Email: clanlab@health.wa.gov.au
Web: www.healthywa.wa.gov.au/clandruglab

Local government:

Contact your local government and ask to speak to their environmental health officer

To contact your local council visit:
www.dlg.wa.gov.au > Directory

Department of Environment Regulation –
Pollution Watch Hotline
Tel: 1300 784 782
Email: pollutionwatch@der.wa.gov.au



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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Department of Health
WA Police Service



Clandestine drug laboratories ('clan labs')



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Reporting and Risk Management

Clan labs in Western Australia

Clandestine drug laboratories ('clan labs') are sites where illegal drugs are manufactured in secret, usually with improvised equipment, chemicals and methods. Hundreds of clan labs have been discovered in recent years, mainly in the Perth metropolitan area and larger regional centres.

Clan labs primarily produce methylamphetamine (such as 'speed', 'meth' or 'ice'). While most clan labs are found in rented accommodation, others have been found in bush sites or on vacant land. Clan labs in Western Australia are often smaller and pose a lower contamination risk than those found in other parts of Australia.

Identifying a clan lab

Clandestine drug laboratory indicators
From outside:

- chemical odours coming from the building, rubbish or detached buildings. The odours can be bitter, ammonia, solvent or chlorine type smells
- exhaust fans running at odd times
- frequent visitors at odd hours
- windows blackened out or curtains always drawn
- people coming outside only to smoke
- occupants unfriendly, appear secretive about their activities, exhibit paranoid or odd behaviour
- expensive security and surveillance equipment
- access denied to landlords, neighbours, property managers and other visitors
- rubbish containing a large amount of cold or flu medication, chemical containers or fertiliser bags
- bottles, plastic containers and boxes with labels removed

- soil staining and/or dead vegetation around drains and plumbing fixtures.

From inside or outside (as some drug laboratories are located in isolated bush areas or vehicles):

- laboratory glassware, equipment and documents
- containers with clear liquids in them, with a chalky coloured solid on the bottom or similar
- containers with two layered liquids in them – one dark coloured layer and one light
- used coffee filters containing either a white pasty or reddish brown substance
- baking dishes or similar containing white crystalline substance
- the presence of hot plates near chemicals
- large quantities of disposed lithium ion batteries
- household apparatus such as jerry cans or containers fitted with rubber hosing
- clipsal bags/scales
- white powder/residue
- gas cylinders with blue staining to the brass valve.

It is important to note that clan labs using the 'shake 'n' bake' method can be confined to single containers.



Decontamination

When a clan lab is located, the WA Police and the ChemCentre remove the bulk of drug-related chemicals and equipment. However contaminated residue or waste materials which remain can pose a health risk to occupants and sometimes nearby residents.

At the conclusion of the WA Police investigation, proper site decontamination should be undertaken. This decontamination should follow the procedures outlined in the Department of Health's (WA Health) '*Guidelines for the Notification and Risk Management of a Clandestine Drug Laboratory – March 2014*'.

The arrangements for this site decontamination are facilitated by WA Health in conjunction with the relevant local government – or in the case of public housing, the Department of Housing. In the case of external contamination, such as soil or the environment generally, the Department of Environment Regulation will also become involved.

Who is 'at risk'?

Clan labs primarily pose a health risk to the operators of the lab and occupants of the building.

If the clan lab is not decontaminated properly after its discovery then subsequent occupants may also be at risk. Clan lab residue or waste material is especially dangerous for toddlers, young children and pregnant women – depending on the amount of contamination, its location and how much exposure occurs.

People who discover or visit a site are considered much less likely to be affected, but should still take precautions if aware of its presence.

What are the risks?

Exposure to chemicals found in clan labs can result in:

- headaches
- elevated heart rate, feelings of high adrenaline or euphoria
- burning feeling in lungs and/or throat
- watery or burning eyes
- nausea
- burning skin
- coughing or choking
- pain in diaphragm (chest)
- feeling of coldness or weakness
- shortness of breath/dizziness
- decrease in cognitive function, vertigo, and convulsions.

Seek medical advice immediately if you experience any adverse effects linked to exposure to hazardous substances. Important additional measures are:

- to move well away from the contamination source
- seek fresh air
- in the case of eye or skin irritation apply copious amounts of fresh water.

In the case of a clan lab fire or explosion an ambulance should be called immediately as people may:

- be killed
- suffer severe life-threatening burns
- suffer physical injuries.