

Clandestine Laboratories

Canada's Drug Strategy is the federal response to the harmful use of substances. These include illegal drugs, alcohol, pharmaceuticals, inhalants and solvents. The Strategy takes a balanced approach to reducing both the demand for, and the supply of, drugs and substances. It contributes to a healthier, safer Canada through prevention, treatment, enforcement, and harm reduction initiatives.

A Significant Risk

Underground or clandestine labs that produce synthetic drugs such as methamphetamine and ecstasy (MDMA and MDA) are a serious health and public safety concern in Canada. Methamphetamine, also known as crystal meth, speed or crank, is a highly addictive stimulant. Ecstasy use can lead to disruptions in body temperature and harmful reactions such as dehydration, hyperthermia, and seizures, as well as dangerously high blood pressure and heart rate.

Beyond the physical risks associated with the drugs they produce, clandestine labs are themselves a risk. The chemicals used in the production of these drugs – known as “precursors” – are often explosive, flammable, and highly toxic. Because of the risk of fire, explosion and poisonous gas, clandestine labs are dangerous crime scenes and a significant risk to both first responders, such as police, and the public. These sites also pose a risk of groundwater contamination and other environmental dangers as these chemicals can be flushed down drains or simply discarded on the ground.

Clandestine labs have traditionally been located in rural areas. However, they are also now being set up in single-family homes and apartments in urban, residential areas. In 2003, for example, the majority of clandestine labs dismantled by

police in Canada were found in urban neighbourhoods. The number of these labs has proliferated in recent years due to the ease and simplicity with which these drugs can be produced, and the potentially large profits that have attracted increasing involvement of organized crime groups.

Enforcement Efforts

The RCMP, in cooperation with other Canadian law enforcement agencies, has been successful in dismantling numerous clandestine labs across Canada. The RCMP and other police services also work closely with the Canada Border Services Agency and with U.S. law enforcement agencies, to control the production and trafficking of these drugs throughout North America.

These enforcement efforts have been enhanced by the implementation of Canada's *Precursor Control Regulations* as part of the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*. Because many of the chemicals used to manufacture illegal drugs also have legitimate uses, the *Precursor Control Regulations* established a licensing and registration system to monitor and control the production, distribution, import and export of these chemicals. Among other requirements, legitimate users must keep careful records, maintain appropriate security, and report any loss or theft of the chemicals listed in the Regulations.

To learn more about Canada's Drug Strategy, please visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds

Find out what governments, non-governmental organizations, and other partners are doing – National Framework for Action – Visit www.healthcanada.gc.ca/cds-nfa

