

AG Schimel: Announces meth lab clean up program to reduce lab clean up costs by 90 percent

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GREEN BAY, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel announced today that six methamphetamine chemical storage containers will be placed across Wisconsin to assist local law enforcement with meth lab clean up. These special containers provided by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) will save local law enforcement time, money, and increase the safety and security during a clandestine lab response. It is estimated these containers will on average help reduce cleanup costs by approximately 90 percent.

“Meth use and production is threatening our state, and draining law enforcement’s resources,” said Attorney General Schimel. “These specialized containers are going to help reduce the resources needed to clean up meth labs and make communities safer after a lab is found.”

A FBI report from 2017 estimates that from 2011 to 2015, methamphetamine use in Wisconsin likely expanded between 250 and 300 percent. From 2012 to 2015, 73% of Wisconsin counties have had at least one meth lab; each pound of meth produced creates five to six pounds of hazardous waste. The remediation of meth labs is very costly and dangerous, requiring highly specialized equipment and personnel. DOJ Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) estimates from 2014 to 2015 meth lab cleanup costs exceeded \$235,000.

To reduce costs and increase safety of meth lab clean up, new methamphetamine chemical storage containers will be placed in six Wisconsin counties (Barron, Brown, Dane, Eau Claire, Marathon, and Vernon), in partnership with each county’s sheriff’s office and DCI.

Prior to the placement of the meth chemical storage containers, law enforcement had to guard lab sites sometimes for several hours while waiting for qualified contractors to arrive and remove the waste. Now, local and state law enforcement certified in meth lab stabilization and disposal will be able transport the dangerous waste to the nearest secure container, immediately restoring the safety and security of the community. This will also allow contractors to collect the hazardous waste in larger batches, decreasing costs incurred.

On average a single meth lab cleanup will cost at least \$3,000, not including overtime. By using the meth chemical storage containers, a single meth lab cleanup will only cost \$300 on average. The cost to the DEA to establish the containers and initially maintain supplies is estimated at \$250,000; ongoing costs will increase over time as additional equipment and supplies are issued.

Attorney General Brad Schimel has greatly expanded DOJ's efforts to respond to the growing meth crisis in Wisconsin.

- Appointed three assistant attorney general (AAG) to assist local district attorneys and law enforcement in the prosecution of methamphetamine-related cases; one each assigned to Wausau, Appleton, and Eau Claire to support Northern Wisconsin. This AAG represents the state in criminal cases; advises local prosecutors on matters relating to methamphetamine trafficking; and assists in the development of legislation concerning the growing threat that methamphetamine poses to local communities.
- Hired an analyst at the Wisconsin Statewide Information Center (WSIC) and purchased equipment for investigating meth labs; and is providing training and financial support for the efforts of local law enforcement agencies and multi-jurisdictional drug task forces. Funding for these initiatives comes from a \$1.5 million Methamphetamine Initiative Grant from the United States Department of Justice.
- Hired four additional criminal investigation agents who are focused on drug interdiction and drug trafficking.
- Increased spending on treatment alternative and diversion courts (TAD) in 51 counties and two tribes, with more than \$6 million provided annually to support these local programs.
- In 2017, Attorney General Schimel successfully sought a stay from the Supreme Court of the United States in *Anderson, et al. v. Loertscher*, a challenge to the state's Unborn Child Protection Act. The Unborn Child Protection Act or 1997 Wisconsin Act 292 gives county health services

agencies the legal authority to assist substance-addicted, pregnant women with their addiction, thus protecting both the mothers and their unborn children.

- Established the **KNOW METH** public awareness campaign statewide with Marshfield Clinic Health System, Northwoods Coalition, and the Alliance of Wisconsin Youth with more than \$225,000 in funding. The campaign is aimed at preventing people from using methamphetamine and to encourage those who are addicted to seek treatment.

To learn more about the impact of meth use in Wisconsin go to: www.knowmethwi.org.