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# *The Belleville Beat*

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From the Desk of Sgt. Don Sax

Welcome to July 2005 and its issue of *The Belleville Beat*.

Methamphetamine:

Drugs are a major concern to many people. Most of us don't use illegal drugs or associate with people who do use them. We do not know what some drugs are or how to tell if there is drug use near us. This month I will pass along information about methamphetamine, one of the worst of the worst illegal drugs.

Methamphetamine or "meth" was once the exclusive business of biker gangs and is now here in the Midwest. The "new" meth is more pure, and our neighboring state of Missouri is one of the leading producing states in the nation. Methamphetamine is known on the street as "meth," "crank," "speed," "ice" or "crystal." It is one of the nation's most dangerous and lethal illicit drugs. It can be smoked, snorted, swallowed or injected. It is almost instantaneously addicting. Its use can result in violence, paranoia and death. The high from meth is more intense and lasts much longer than the high from most illicit drugs. The fall afterwards is also much harder and deeper, resulting in an instant craving for more meth. While meth is relatively inexpensive when compared to other street drugs, the intense addiction often leads users to a life of crime and violence to maintain their habits.

One of the attractions for meth pushers is that meth is a lucrative business. A small investment can reap huge profits. It can be made with a skillet and a stove, in a motel or bathroom, or even in a car's trunk with a plastic drinking cup. This also makes discovering clandestine meth laboratories difficult for police officers. The ingredients can easily be obtained from your local pharmacy or hardware store. Meth normally contains ephedrine or pseudoephedrine found in over-the-counter asthma medications. Depending on the recipe other ingredients used in the cooking are items with skull-and-crossbones labels: lye, rat killer, battery parts, and various and dangerous chemicals. It is a highly volatile mix. Many meth cooks have severely burned themselves or even died from explosions and caustic fumes while cooking their deadly product.

Police officers and crime lab personnel must undergo intensive training on how to dismantle clandestine meth laboratories in order to do it safely. Once they are uncovered, these labs are treated as hazardous waste sites. If the toxic chemicals used in the labs are dumped into the soil or water, they become an environmental hazard as well.

Signs of methamphetamine addiction vary. One might notice sudden bursts of energy followed by periods of deep depression, anxiety, paranoia and exhaustion, rapid weight loss, pale skin, poor personal hygiene, and possibly track marks.

Signs of a clandestine laboratory include a strong smell of ammonia or ether, an unusually large amount of traffic at a location and extraordinary means of ventilation for a location (such as air conditioning units and window fans used even in cool weather).

If you suspect a methamphetamine lab in your neighborhood, call the HOTLINE, 277-TELL (8355).