



Potential Danger on the Side of the Road

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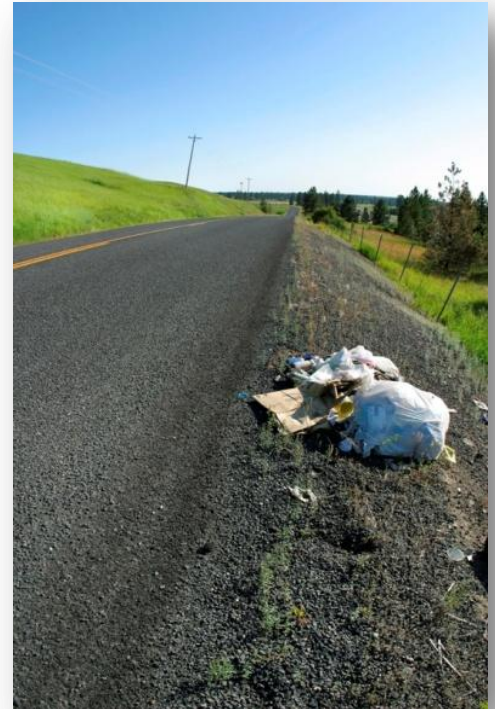
Highway Workers face many potential dangers on a daily basis when they work on the side of the road. One danger they may not expect to face is exposure to waste from methamphetamine (meth) labs.

Five to six pounds of toxic waste is produced for every pound of meth manufactured. Those running the labs will often dump the waste or lab equipment on the side of the road without regard for the hazards it can cause to people and the environment. It is important that road crews in your area know what to look for and what to do.

Although it can look like any other trash dumped on the side of the road, waste from meth labs may contain trace amounts of the chemicals used, which are toxic. The fumes can cause itching and burn the eyes, throat, and lungs if inhaled. Physical contact with the chemicals can burn the skin and cause severe respiratory damage.

What to Look For

- Unusual, strong odors like cat urine, ether, ammonia, nail polish remover or similar chemicals
- Pills that look like common cold pills or packaging from cold pills that contain ephedrine or pseudo-ephedrine
- Containers for antifreeze, lantern fuel, drain cleaner, starter fluid
- Red-stained coffee filters, bed sheets, or pillow cases



Should you find items that you suspect come from a meth lab, do not investigate on your own. Immediately contact local police or the sheriff's office and move away from the area.

If you have come in contact with the equipment, seek medical attention immediately. Signs of exposure to meth chemicals include headache, nausea, dizziness, fatigue, shortness of breath, coughing, chest pain, lack of coordination and burns. Until medical personnel can arrive, you should decontaminate yourself and your clothing as soon as possible. Remove contaminated clothing and flush exposed skin, eyes and hair with water for at least 15 minutes. Thoroughly wash your skin with soap and water when possible.

By providing this information to your crew, you have given them the knowledge necessary to stay safe should they face discarded meth equipment.