Bath Township Fire Department			Standard Operating Guideline	
Section **Operations**	**Referral No.** **O-41**	**Subject:** **Clandestine Drug Labs**	**Date Issued** **4/08**	**Date Revised**

Purpose:

- To provide guidelines for the recognition and proper response to clandestine drug labs.

Scope:

- This standard operating guideline shall apply to all personnel.
- The number of clandestine drug laboratories has increased dramatically in recent years. The number of seizures, "busts," or "raids," made by law enforcement agencies has also increased. Clandestine drug laboratory investigations, seizures, and arrests of suspects are all police department or law enforcement agency matters. However, local law enforcement agencies are calling upon fire department hazardous incident response teams for assistance during raids and for advice on safety matters.

Responsibilities:

- Incident Commander
  - Ensure that personnel respond properly.
  - Provide direction based on the Incident Management System.
  - Ensure the safety of all personnel.
- Personnel
  - All personnel have the responsibility of following the direction of Incident Command at an emergency scene.
  - All personnel have the responsibility to wear the proper safety equipment and to operate in a safe manner.

General:

- **Safety is always our first priority**
- The Fire Department will provide limited support for law enforcement agencies, when requested, at sites of clandestine drug laboratories.
  - Support may consist of, but is not limited to: providing research and information on chemicals that are suspected or are known to be in the laboratory, remote exterior air monitoring, and decontamination of police entry personnel.

HAZARDS

- Substitution of proper equipment with unsafe items is prevalent in low budget clandestine laboratory operations.
    - For example, pressure cookers have been substituted for three neck flasks in the initial cooking stage of methamphetamine.
    - Without ventilation, this type of operation can easily generate toxic levels of phosphine gas.
- Booby traps have been left in place and armed when a lab is abandoned.
- Opening or moving doors, windows, refrigerator doors, chemical containers, or furniture may be a triggering mechanism for an explosive device or chemical reaction that is lethal.
- Trip wires made from monofilament fishing line may be strung across doorways, hallways, or across rooms to activate different types of devices.
- It is imperative that **nothing** is moved, shut off, turned on, or touched, at a laboratory, whether it is operational or abandoned.
- Electric switches, vacuum pumps, glassware, chemical containers, or anything that is plugged into a wall outlet should not be touched.
- Water sources, especially to reflux or condensing towers, should not be shut off.
    - Shutting off the water supply to a cooking process can result in an explosion.

INDICATORS

- Personnel should be aware of the indications of potential clandestine drug laboratories when responding to EMS, fire, check odor, or another service request.
- Common indicators are:
    - Unusual odors like ether, acetic, solvents, and odors of urea.

- Glassware that is normally associated with school or industrial laboratories, such as flasks, beakers, flasks with vacuum ports, glass cooling towers, and funnels.
- Heating elements, hot plates, or heating mantles.
- Vacuum pumps, plastic or rubber tubing.
- Marked and unmarked chemical containers of various sizes.

SUSPECTED DRUG LABORATORY OPERATION - NOTIFICATION PROCESS

- Personnel that encounter a suspected laboratory should withdraw to a safe location as soon as it is possible, using discretion on actions and radio conversation.
- Allen County Sheriff's Department shall be notified of the situation.
- If a situation warrants additional immediate action (e.g. evacuation of surrounding areas, several victims, a chemical release or spill), the Dispatch Center should be requested to send the appropriate level of a hazardous materials assignment.
- Command should also request the response of the EMA

TACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

- The recognition of the presence of a clandestine drug laboratory that is involved in a fire may not occur until after fire control has been achieved.
- The initial indications of the presence of a laboratory may be subtle or very apparent.
- Depending on the products involved, a fire in a lab can spread faster and burn with more intensity that what might normally be expected.
- The color of the flames may appear to be an unusually bright or dark orange, or the flames may be of several different colors.
- An unusual color of smoke or odor may also be present.
- A laboratory that is involved in a fire situation should be viewed pessimistically by Command.
- Command should request the Dispatch Center to send balance of the appropriate level of a hazardous materials assignment.
- A defensive mode may be appropriate for personnel safety.

- Standard protective clothing and SCBA use may not afford complete protection.
- An acceptable alternative is to protect any exposures and allow the fire to burn, providing the products of combustion being generated are not complicating the problem further.
- Run-off may also create a problem and diking may be necessary.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Personnel showing any signs or symptoms of a chemical exposure during or after any incident involving a laboratory or a suspected laboratory should be treated and transported
- Critical life threatening injuries require transport to the closest hospital.
- All potentially exposed personnel and equipment must be decontaminated.
- Exposed equipment, especially protective clothing, may have to be properly disposed of.

ENTRY

- Bath Twp. Fire Department personnel **will not** participate in a law enforcement agency entry operation into a suspected and unsecured clandestine drug laboratory.
- Security shall mean that the Police Department Bomb Squad and S.W.A.T. have surveyed the area and all suspects are in custody, and confirmation that the building has been searched and no explosive devices were found.
- Bath Twp. Fire Department personnel may make an entry into a secured drug laboratory if an emergency situation involving hazardous materials develops and if the safety of Fire Department personnel is not jeopardized.
- Prior to taking any action at a suspected clandestine drug laboratory, the Fire Department will request the response of a representative of the EMA.

DISPOSAL

- Proper disposal of the hazardous material(s) in a clandestine laboratory is the responsibility of the law enforcement agency that is making the seizure.
- The law enforcement agency on-scene must arrange clean up with the proper contractor.