



# NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Coalition of retailers and manufacturers mobilize effort to combat methamphetamine production.**

**Vancouver, British Columbia – November 16, 2004** – At a news conference held this morning in Vancouver, representatives of the Meth Watch Coalition, a group representing retailers and manufacturers of self-care health products, previewed a program that will be launched in the new year to prevent the diversion of common household products into the manufacture of the street drug methamphetamine. Methamphetamine, also known as “crystal meth,” “speed,” or “crank,” is a highly addictive stimulant and a growing health and social problem throughout North America.

“Methamphetamine is a growing threat to the health of our youth and the safety of our communities,” said Gerry Harrington of NDMAC, a Coalition member. “Home labs supplied by household products obtained in retail stores have emerged as a huge part of the methamphetamine problem in the United States and we’re determined to do what we can to prevent them from taking hold in Canada.”

The Coalition has developed the Meth Watch Program, an approach to curtailing the theft or purchase of over-the-counter cold remedies and other household products, for the purposes of methamphetamine production. The program’s main focus is on training retail employees to recognize suspicious purchases and to report these to law enforcement officials through a toll-free hotline provided for this purpose by the RCMP. The program also includes additional in-store measures aimed at reducing the theft of these products for methamphetamine production.

“Retailers have a huge stake in the health and safety of the communities we serve,” said Christina Bisanz of the Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores. “While pharmacists have always played an important role in ensuring appropriate medicine use, we and our colleagues in the retail community feel that the seriousness of the methamphetamine problem merits this investment in the training of our other front-line staff to address the issue.”

Methamphetamine can be manufactured using cough and cold remedies containing pseudoephedrine and other common household products, including rubbing alcohol, drain cleaner, acetone, starter fluid, matchbooks, lithium batteries, rock salt, coffee filters and glassware. The vast majority of methamphetamine production in Canada comes from so-called “super labs” which generally obtain these items in bulk at the

Canadian Association  
of Chain Drug Stores  
[www.cacds.ca](http://www.cacds.ca)

NDMAC – *Advancing  
Canadian self-care*  
[www.ndmac.ca](http://www.ndmac.ca)

Retail Council of  
Canada  
[www.retailcouncil.org](http://www.retailcouncil.org)

Royal Canadian  
Mounted Police  
(Observer)

### **Meth Watch Coalition Secretariat**

c/o NDMAC – 1111 Prince of Wales Drive, Suite 406, Ottawa, ON K2C 3T2  
Tel: (613) 723-0777 • Fax: (613) 723-0779 • [www.methwatch.ca](http://www.methwatch.ca)

manufacturer or distributor level. New regulations enacted in early 2003 are making this bulk diversion of the key ingredients increasingly difficult. Evidence from other jurisdictions, particularly the United States, shows that when this happens, home labs supplied with products stolen or purchased at the retail level become much more common. In 2003, the RCMP seized fewer than 50 methamphetamine labs across Canada, all of which were super labs. In that same year, almost 3000 labs were seized in the state of Missouri alone, the vast majority of them being home labs supplied by products obtained at the retail level. These home labs only contribute about 20 percent of the total methamphetamine produced in the United States, but divert a huge amount of police resources away from combating the super lab problem and impose enormous environmental and safety risks to the neighbourhoods in which they operate.

“It is vitally important that we do everything we can to prevent the home lab problem from taking root in Canada as it has in other jurisdictions,” said Sgt. Vianney Tremblay of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. “Unless proactive measures are taken, we can expect these home labs to become much more common in Canada and, with that, we’ll see all the environmental damage, the community safety issues and the additional drain on law enforcement resources.”

“When we released B.C.’s integrated meth strategy, we identified the need to build safer communities,” said Brenda Locke, B.C.’s Minister of State for Mental Health and Addiction Services. “Retail outlets and medicine manufacturers can play a role in curtailing access to the ingredients used in methamphetamine production. We appreciate this sector’s participation in helping us reduce the effects of methamphetamines on our communities.”

The Meth Watch Program is modeled on a similar program introduced in the State of Kansas and now being adopted in 22 other U.S. states. The program contributed to a 27 percent drop in methamphetamine lab seizures in Kansas over its first three years of operation. The Meth Watch Program web-based training site and in-store materials have been developed and implementation in participating Western Canadian retail outlets will begin in early 2005.

- 30 -

For more information, please contact:

Gerry Harrington  
NDMAC – *Advancing Canadian self-care*  
Tel.: 613-723-0777  
Fax: 613-723-0779  
Cell: 613-240-3715  
Email: gerry.harrington@ndmac.ca

**Meth Watch Coalition Secretariat**

c/o NDMAC – 1111 Prince of Wales Drive, Suite 406, Ottawa, ON K2C 3T2  
Tel: (613) 723-0777 • Fax: (613) 723-0779 • [www.methwatch.ca](http://www.methwatch.ca)



## Background on the Meth Watch Coalition

Canadian Association  
of Chain Drug Stores  
[www.cacds.com](http://www.cacds.com)

NDMAC – Advancing  
Canadian self-care  
[www.ndmac.ca](http://www.ndmac.ca)

Retail Council of  
Canada  
[www.retailcouncil.org](http://www.retailcouncil.org)

Royal Canadian  
Mounted Police  
(Observer)

The Meth Watch Program has been designed and will be implemented by a coalition of retail partners, law enforcement, pharmacy and the self-care health products industry. The Coalition partners are:

### **NDMAC - Advancing Canadian self-care**

NDMAC, the Association representing the \$3.6 billion self-care health products industry, is dedicated to advancing Canadian self-care by building an environment that improves the opportunities for people to manage their own health through the responsible use of safe and effective self-care health products. NDMAC's member companies are at the forefront of the industry in Canada, accounting for the vast majority of all self-care health products sold nationally each year. Together with government and the health care sector, NDMAC member companies maintain leadership in the establishment of the regulatory framework that safeguards the development, registration, advertisement and sale of safe and effective self-care health products in Canada.

### **Canadian Association of Chain Drug Stores (CACDS)**

The CACDS is a national association that represents the chain pharmacy industry in Canada. The twenty-one members of CACDS are traditional chain drug stores, grocery chains and mass merchandisers with pharmacies. Together, CACDS members operate 5,165 stores that dispense 75 per cent of the nation's prescriptions each year. CACDS members employ more than 96,000 Canadians, including 70 per cent of the pharmacists in Canada. Its 180 Associate Members represent all supply categories and services in the retail pharmacy industry, including pharmaceuticals, health and wellness products, self-care medications, and other consumer products.

### **Retail Council of Canada**

Founded in 1963, Retail Council of Canada is the Voice of Retail. RCC is a not-for-profit association whose more than 9,000 members represent all retail formats, including national and regional department stores, mass merchants, specialty chains, independent stores and online merchants. We speak for an industry that touches the daily lives of Canadians in every corner of the country — by providing jobs; consumer value; world-class product selection; and the colour, sizzle and entertainment of the marketplace.

**Observers: the RCMP and Health Canada**

### **Meth Watch Coalition Secretariat**

c/o NDMAC – 1111 Prince of Wales Drive, Suite 406, Ottawa, ON K2C 3T2  
Tel: (613) 723-0777 • Fax: (613) 723-0779 • [www.methwatch.ca](http://www.methwatch.ca)



## Background on Methamphetamine

Canadian Association  
of Chain Drug Stores  
[www.cacds.ca](http://www.cacds.ca)

NDMAC – *Advancing  
Canadian self-care*  
[www.ndmac.ca](http://www.ndmac.ca)

Retail Council of  
Canada  
[www.retailcouncil.org](http://www.retailcouncil.org)

Royal Canadian  
Mounted Police  
(Observer)

### What is methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine, also known as “meth,” “speed,” “crank,” or “ice,” is a powerful and highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. Methamphetamine is a synthetic drug produced or sold as pills, capsules, or powder that can be smoked, snorted, injected, or swallowed.

As a neurotoxin, methamphetamine damages the nervous system. Its use can cause dependence and addiction, psychosis, stroke, dangerously high body temperature, and cardiac arrhythmia. Withdrawal often results in severe depression and paranoia.

### Methamphetamine production

Methamphetamine has been made in Canada and the United States, principally from bulk quantities of chemicals in so-called “super labs.” Methamphetamine production, however, has changed significantly and law enforcement authorities have seen an increase in the number of small labs where methamphetamine cooks use “recipes,” often found online, to create small amounts of the drug from legitimate household products.

While these small homemade labs produce a tiny fraction of the methamphetamine a “super lab” may produce, they present a huge danger to the communities in which they operate because toxic, hazardous, and explosive chemicals are possible by-products of the production process.

### **Methamphetamine can be made from commonly available, legitimate household products**

These small labs can be found in a methamphetamine “cook’s” home, in an automobile, or alongside a road. The ingredients used to make methamphetamine are legitimate household materials, usually found at retail stores, such as:

.../2

### **Meth Watch Coalition Secretariat**

c/o NDMAC – 1111 Prince of Wales Drive, Suite 406, Ottawa, ON K2C 3T2  
Tel: (613) 723-0777 • Fax: (613) 723-0779 • [www.methwatch.ca](http://www.methwatch.ca)

- Over-the-counter cough, cold and allergy medicines containing pseudoephedrine or ephedrine
- Acetone
- Rubbing and isopropyl alcohol
- Iodine
- Starter fluid (ether)
- Gas additives (methanol)
- Drain cleaner (sulphuric acid)
- Lithium batteries
- Rock salt
- Matchbooks (red phosphorus)
- Lye
- Paint thinner
- Aluminum foil
- Glassware
- Coffee filters
- Propane tanks

Retailers are in a unique position to help law enforcement in the fight against methamphetamine, since the small-scale labs use a number of commonly found household products available at drugstores, supermarkets, and other retail outlets. The Meth Watch program addresses this problem, and gives communities proven and powerful tools to help curb methamphetamine production.

**Meth Watch Coalition Secretariat**

c/o NDMAC – 1111 Prince of Wales Drive, Suite 406, Ottawa, ON K2C 3T2  
Tel: (613) 723-0777 • Fax: (613) 723-0779 • [www.methwatch.ca](http://www.methwatch.ca)



# The Meth Watch Program

Canadian Association  
of Chain Drug Stores  
[www.cacds.ca](http://www.cacds.ca)

NDMAC – *Advancing  
Canadian self-care*  
[www.ndmac.ca](http://www.ndmac.ca)

Retail Council of  
Canada  
[www.retailcouncil.org](http://www.retailcouncil.org)

Royal Canadian  
Mounted Police  
(Observer)

## What is Meth Watch?

The Meth Watch Program is designed to help curtail the theft and suspicious sales of pseudoephedrine products and other common household commodities used in the illicit manufacturing of methamphetamine in small, underground labs. A key goal of this program is to promote cooperation between retailers and law enforcement agencies to prevent the diversion of legitimate products for illegal use.

Meth Watch is modelled after a highly successful program of the same name that originally started in Kansas as a public-private partnership. As news spread of its success, several American states began to adopt the Kansas model. That prompted the U.S. Consumer Healthcare Products Association to develop a national program that can be easily adapted elsewhere.

The Meth Watch objectives are to:

- ❑ Increase awareness by retail employees and management of methamphetamine production and how precursor chemicals are diverted from legal products into illegal manufacture of methamphetamine.
- ❑ Promote co-operation and teamwork between retailers and law enforcement professionals.
- ❑ Reduce methamphetamine production without disrupting the availability of legal products.

## How Meth Watch Works

Meth Watch is a proven and accessible program that has resulted in methamphetamine lab seizures, hampered small toxic lab methamphetamine production, and decreased pseudoephedrine product losses by retailers. While retail involvement is key, Meth Watch is a voluntary program that involves many people at the community level.

Participating retailers place the precursor products involved where they can be easily monitored, and strategically post Meth Watch signs and tags on their store fronts and on the shelves where the products are located. Using a specially developed web learning portal, they train their employees to recognize suspicious transactions, without confronting or identifying the customer, and to contact law enforcement when these take place.

### **Meth Watch Coalition Secretariat**

c/o NDMAC – 1111 Prince of Wales Drive, Suite 406, Ottawa, ON K2C 3T2  
Tel: (613) 723-0777 • Fax: (613) 723-0779 • [www.methwatch.ca](http://www.methwatch.ca)