



BREADEN McCARDLE

L A W Y E R S

PROPERTY EXTRA

Methamphetamine

A Warning for all Property Owners

What is it?

Methamphetamine, or meth, is a highly toxic, powerful central nervous system stimulant that is a highly addictive drug. Some of its street names include P, Crystal, Speed, Chalk, Glass, and Ice. It can be smoked, injected, or ingested and the manufacturing, distributing, or possession of meth is illegal under the Misuse of Drugs Act 1975.

What is the problem?

Meth is manufactured in what is commonly known as a "Meth Lab" and the process is called "Cooking". A Meth Lab can be set up quickly, easily and almost anywhere using common household equipment and chemicals. The cooking process can involve explosives, solvents, metals, salts, and corrosives.



Meth labs have been found in homes, rental properties, sheds, holiday baches and motel rooms around the country. They are set up quickly, used for purpose, then the cooks can easily move on to another location before they can be caught. As a result, large numbers of ex meth labs are dotted around the country, in every community, sometimes without the owner of the property having any idea of their property's history.

While the toxic chemical fumes, spills, explosions, and fires make meth labs dangerous places during the cooking process, it is often what is left behind that is the real danger for rental property owners and prospective owners.

The "home-cooking" of meth spreads toxins to every area of the room where the meth was cooked and beyond.

Nothing escapes contamination - the carpet, walls, furniture, drapes, hard floor coverings, benches, and even the air itself becomes toxic.

Why is it a problem?

Exposure to the high levels of contaminants found in meth labs can cause shortness of breath, cough, chest pain, dizziness, lack of coordination, chemical irritation, and burns to the skin, eyes, mouth and nose. Symptoms such as headache, nausea, dizziness, and fatigue have occurred in people who entered a property where a meth lab has been operating, even months after it was shut down.

There has been a lot of publicity lately in the mainstream media on Methamphetamine and how to recognise a Meth Lab, and rightly so, as it is quickly becoming an epidemic that is affecting all parts of our society.

The costs to decontaminate a residential house used for the use or manufacture of methamphetamine range from a few thousand dollars to hundreds of thousands of dollars, some properties are beyond repair and are demolished. Your insurance policy may cover some damages but many will not cover illegal activity.

When purchasing a property to live in you may be inadvertently exposing yourself and your family to serious harm and illness. A good paint job and some redecorating can make it difficult to recognise a contaminated house. It may be some time before you recognise the symptoms as they can come on slowly and by the time you do, the damage has already been done.

If you are a rental property owner you may have a policy that covers the loss of your existing rental income but it is unlikely that any insurance policy would cover the difficulty you may have in re-letting a contaminated property or the actual long-term loss of value to the property.

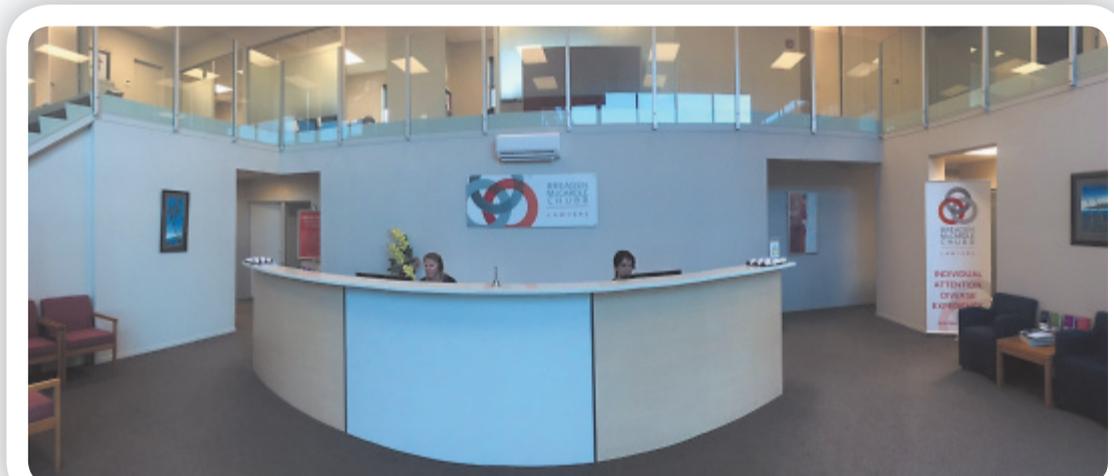
In recent months Breaden McCardle has been contacted by a number of clients who had discovered that a property belonging to them had been contaminated by Methamphetamine. The cases have not been isolated to one particular area and the value of the property has varied from the less expensive to the high end of the market.

What can I do?

At Breaden McCardle we recognise that this is becoming a major issue for clients and the problem is only getting worse. Property is often the biggest investment our clients make, so we will work with you to minimise the risk of Methamphetamine becoming a problem for you.

Our legal experts can advise on how to:

- **Test** a property for the presence of Methamphetamine.
- **Protect** yourself during the purchase process.
- **Deal** with tenants you suspect of using meth.
- **Prevent** your property being used for meth production or use.



"This is a significant & growing issue for all landlords."

*Glen Sowry
Chief Executive
Housing New Zealand*

Contact Us

If you need assistance or want to discuss this or any other matter with our legal experts please call us.

We are here to help.

**Breaden McCardle
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