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Meth labs and your rental properties.

Dear RSI Client,

As I am sure you know, recent legislation was introduced that would directly effect Meth Lab Cleanup. Representative Mark Cloer R-Colorado Springs and Senator Mark Hillman R-Elbert introduced the legislation. Meth Labs have become a growing problem in the multi-housing industry. To better understand the problems of cleanup let's first look at meth in general.

Methamphetamine, also known as "meth," "speed," "crank," "crystal" and "ice," is a very powerful man-made drug that affects the central nervous system. It is illegally made, often in makeshift laboratories set up in rented property such as apartments or hotel rooms. After the laboratory is shut down, the property is often contaminated with hazardous chemicals. No one should enter a place that has been used as a meth lab unless they are wearing appropriate personal protection equipment.

Meth can be made using many different chemical processes. Most of these include the use of volatile organic compounds (VOCs), explosives, acids, bases, metals and chemical salts. Many steps are involved in making meth, and other harmful chemicals can be formed during the process. As a result, hundreds of different chemicals can contribute to the contamination of a property.

Some materials in a building such as an apartment can absorb chemicals. Examples include carpeting, wallboard, ceiling tile, wood and fabric. Furniture or draperies also may become contaminated. If residues enter the heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system, other areas in a building can become contaminated. Soil or groundwater may become contaminated if chemicals are disposed of in a septic system or dumped outside

Exposure to meth residues may cause symptoms similar to those experienced by meth users. Exposure to VOCs may cause symptoms such as nose and throat irritation,

headaches, dizziness, nausea, vomiting, confusion and breathing difficulties. Benzene is a VOC known to cause cancer. Acids or bases will cause a burning sensation on the skin and in mucous membranes, and can cause severe eye damage. Exposure to metals and salts can cause a wide range of health effects including respiratory irritation, decreased mental function, anemia, kidney damage and birth defects. Lead and mercury are particularly hazardous.

The owner of the property is ultimately responsible for the cleanup. The owner also may be legally responsible if persons get sick after they re-enter a contaminated building.

No clean-up standards exist for many chemicals associated with meth labs. The new legislation would give the Board of Health the directive to set standards for cleanup. As I understand it, once standards are in place it will protect property owners from law suits if all cleanup procedures are followed.

I hope you find this information useful, if you would like more information please contact the Colorado Apartment Association. Remember that our team is available to you should you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Jeff Malone
National Marketing Director
Rental Services Inc.