

Kentucky's Integrated Approach to Meth Labs



/Justin Carey, Public Safety Branch, Division of Public Health Protection and Safety

In the 2008 legislative session, Kentucky legislators took great steps to help combat the production of methamphetamine and protect the public's health and wellbeing with the passage of House Bill 765, amending an existing statute, KRS 224.01-410. The new bill assures the responsibility of addressing residential properties contaminated from the production of methamphetamine. It is shared among three state agencies including the Kentucky State Police, Department for Public Health and the Energy and Environment Cabinet.

In the bill, new language was established to add clarity to the issue of a methamphetamine contaminated property by requiring the promulgation of regulations by the Energy and Environment Cabinet that outline decontamination standards for residual meth-

amphetamine and chemical precursors.

The bill also creates a unique, tiered approach to contamination based on the method used as well as the duration and quantity of methamphetamine produced. Assigning each lab a tier will allow for decontamination/remediation requirements to be tailored to the various levels and types of contamination.

HB 765 also establishes a clear role for DPH in protecting those citizens knowingly and unknowingly affected by these laboratories. In the new law, DPH and local health departments will partner with state and local law enforcement agencies to notify owners of meth-contaminated properties and their residents about potential dangers and health effects of meth contamination.

Through these partnerships, law enforce-

ment agencies can now act on behalf of the DPH and place "Notice of Methamphetamine Contamination" postings on all entrances of a residence used in the production of meth at the time of the seizure. This notice serves to identify contaminated properties and warn occupants about the potential health dangers of meth contamination. HB 765 stipulates that these postings remain affixed to entrances into a property until it and its contents are properly decontaminated by a licensed contractor.

The DPH also will help assure the safety of future residents of these properties by requiring owners of contaminated properties to disclose the presence of meth contamination to potential renters or buyers.

HB 765 further strengthened the state's >>

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>> efforts by establishing criminal charges and/or penalties for removing the Notice of Contamination. Home owners also can be charged for failing to disclose the presence of meth contamination to potential renters or buyers. Penalties for violating these requirements consist of class A misdemeanor and class D felony charges pursued at the local level.

When property owners opt to decontaminate a property, the EEC will work closely to oversee the project and ensure all contaminants are properly removed and cleaned. Upon completion, confirmatory testing will be done to assure cleanliness and safety. At that time, local health department personnel will notify property owners and law enforcement that the property has been cleared of all contamination and posting and disclosure requirements no longer apply.

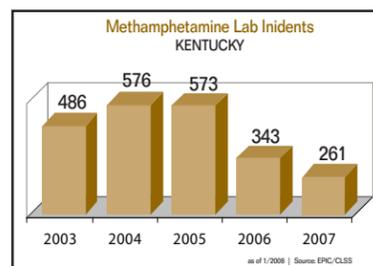
For more information regarding methamphetamine and the dangers of clandestine laboratories, please see the following resources:

- Kentucky Legislative Resource Commission – KRS 224.01-410
<http://www.lrc.ky.gov/>

krs/224%2D01/410.pdf

- Kentucky Energy and Environment Cabinet – Division of Waste Management
<http://www.waste.ky.gov/branches/sf/Meth.htm>
- Kentucky Department for Public Health – Public Health Protection and Safety
<http://chfs.ky.gov/dph/info/phps/>
- Kentucky State Police – Kentucky Methamphetamine Laboratory Listing
http://www.kentuckystatepolice.org/meth_labs.htm
- U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency – National Clandestine Laboratory Listing (Kentucky)
<http://www.usdoj.gov/dea/seizures/kentucky.html>
- Kentucky Office of Drug Control Policy
<http://odcp.ky.gov/>
- Operation UNITE (Unlawful Narcotics Investigations, Treatment & Education)
<http://www.operationunite.org/>

■ Hazardous chemicals, toxic fumes and potentially explosive environments are all factors in the illegal production of methamphetamine in Kentucky and throughout the country. When combined, the ingredients used to create methamphetamine can result in toxic living conditions with potentially deadly consequences. Producers of this drug combine chemicals such as acetone, iodine, anhydrous ammonia, muriatic and hydrochloric acid, ether, methanol and others to produce a product that has been described as the most addictive drug ever created with users becoming addicted after only one use. Production of this drug can lead to extensive chemical and physical contamination in areas where the “cooking” occurs which can result in adverse health effects to all those exposed. Although the number of clandestine methamphetamine laboratories in Kentucky has declined in recent years (2005-573 labs, 2006-343 labs, 2007-261 labs) as a result of increased awareness and initiatives limiting access to methamphetamine precursors, production of this drug remains a real threat to the health and safety of all Kentuckians. ■



THE UNTHINKABLE: Who Survives When Disaster Strikes — And Why?

/Amanda Ripley, Crown Publishers, 2008, 288p.



/Reviewed by
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Amanda Ripley, a senior writer for Time Magazine, has spent many years responding to and reporting on major emergencies. She draws upon that experience in her new book, “The Unthinkable,” detailing, by way of storytelling, what really happens during an emergency situation.

Each chapter addresses one aspect of what might happen to an individual during specific emergencies. In the chapter entitled Groupthink, Ripley reflects upon the Beverly Hills Supper Club fire, which occurred in Southgate, Ky., on May 28, 1977. That event illustrates how groups or crowds of people involved in a disaster situation tend to stay together and behave in a manner far more politely than they might under normal circumstances. One particular aspect she mentions is what disaster experts have termed “milling” — the desire to check in with others, to verify the need to take action before actually evacuating an emergency scene, for example. In fact, in an emergency, your ability to survive depends a great deal upon who you are with when it occurs. Disasters create an instant bond among people, whether it is a car wreck, an earthquake, a flood or a bombing. That bond, however, can present problems in that under groupthink, an individual will find it difficult to go against a group consensus, even when the group is following an ill-advised course of action. A related concept is that of “gathering” — the instinct to pick up personal belongings or other items before evacuating. The story on the Beverly Hills Supper Club fire emphasized an important point, the need for emergency responders to issue “loud, clear warnings and gestures” to preempt what is termed the herd instinct — in which people will actually follow the responders deeper into the emergency, rather than leave the scene. Ripley detailed research that indicated that individuals are strongly inclined to follow the voice of authority in an emergency, something that law enforcement officers are well-advised to remember when re-

sponding to such emergencies.

Another chapter entitled Panic dispels the common misconception that people will panic in an emergency, as has been proven time and again not to be the case in the majority of situations. The research, gathered over the past 50 years, indicates panic occurs only when three conditions are present: when people feel they are trapped, helpless and profoundly isolated, which can occur even when surrounded by other people. A related phenomenon, stampede or crowd crush, occurred during a Black Friday shopping frenzy. Ripley notes that we know how to prevent this from happening, the “problem is convincing the people in charge to make the changes.” Arguing that panic took over is simply a way to blame the victims, and deters planners from making the necessary changes to ensure that panic does not take over.

Other chapters deal with risk assessment, denial, paralysis, fear and resilience. But despite the grim subject matter, Ripley remains upbeat throughout the book, holding true to a theme that does not focus on the bad things that might happen, but what people need to know to survive the event, in the words of the individuals who have survived such events.

The final chapter of the book is entitled Heroism and heralds the efforts of several individuals who took appropriate action resulting in the survival of others. One man dove into the icy Potomac River on Jan. 13, 1982, to rescue survivors of the Air Florida crash. Another young busboy saved hundreds in the Beverly Hills Supper Club fire. Ripley identified common traits among the individuals that prepared them to take action — a “non-negotiable duty to help others when they can” and the belief that they shape their own destinies.

The conclusion of the book starts with the line “In every disaster, buried under the rubble is evidence that we can do better.” It focuses on the actions of a single man, Rick Rescorla, who has been proven a hero not once, but twice. In 1965,

Rescorla served as an officer during the Battle of la Drang, in Vietnam, the battle described in the book “We Were Soldiers Once ... and Young.” In 2001, in his role as head of security, his years of preparing the employees of Morgan Stanley Dean Witter proved the salvation for 2,700 employees located in New York’s twin towers. His years of military experience had taught him what Ripley identifies as the core lesson of her book, “the best way to get the brain to perform under extreme stress is to repeatedly run it through rehearsals beforehand.” He drilled everyone from the highest level of executives to individuals who simply happened to be visiting the company on the day of one of his regular, and unscheduled, emergency drills. When the first plane struck the adjacent tower, he lost no time in ordering an evacuation, and continued to insist upon the evacuation even when the Port Authority stated it was not necessary. Rescorla stayed in the crowded stairwell directing his co-workers to evacuate, even singing in encouragement. When the tower finally collapsed, 2,687 employees had made it safely outside and away from the building. Only 13 Morgan Stanley employees died, including Rescorla and several of his security officers — who were believed to have gone back up to ensure that everyone had evacuated.

The lesson of The Unthinkable is not that disasters result in casualties, something we all know. It is that with forethought, planning and practice, we can survive and help others survive as well. The way we behave in a car wreck is much like the way we will behave in a much larger emergency, a concept that Ripley refers to as our “disaster personality.” Preparation and training, including everyone from the elected officials, government staff (including legal counsel) to our first responders and citizens, is essential to ensure the best possible outcome on the worst possible day. The Unthinkable is a must read for every emergency responder. 📖