

Contamination from smoking meth as opposed to "making" meth

by Dave FEATHERLY

Much publicity has come to a house in the Avenues because Cheyenne police chief and former Wyoming state senator Bob Fecht chose to mislabel it a "clandestine meth lab." Over and over. Arrests were made at this house in October of 2003 and Fecht chose to embellish those arrests to fit his personal agenda and commitment to demolish the house.

Fecht went so far as to introduce in the Wyoming Legislation SF19 (in 2008) entitled: "Clandestine drug laboratories - remediation." He used the property in the Avenues as his poster child for a misdirected cause. He has deliberately and repeatedly referred to the property as "a meth lab" when he knew, or should have known, that it was *never* a meth lab. No other person has represented, nor proven, that methamphetamine was manufactured at that house.

It was, for certain, a house wherein meth was smoked. That description fits hundreds of houses, apartments and motel/hotel rooms in Cheyenne. Meth was smoked in various rooms of the Avenues house in question multiple times. The levels of meth contamination remaining on surfaces in the house exceed standards set in Colorado and Utah, to name two of the states with such standards. Wyoming has no discoverable standards.

There have been no conclusive studies as to health risks to people breathing meth contamination at various levels. Rather, "standards" have been set at the lowest detectable levels equipment can identify the contamination. In Colorado, "meth **lab**" remediation must clean property to .5 micrograms (ug) per 100 cm². In Utah, the level is .1 ug per 100 cm². 100cm² is approximately 4"x4". A microgram is one millionth of a gram and is one of the smallest units of weight/mass measurements used. The cleanup requirement is to a degree of virtually undetectable in states like Utah.

Determining a safe "standard" in Wyo (like <5 ppb of TCE is **safe** in the US) is impossible. Some who may know did not return calls and those who were reached did not know. Some were sure Wyoming has no standards. One thought Fecht's bill addressed the issue. It didn't.

Controlled studies have been done to determine the levels of contamination left from both manufacturing ("cooking") meth and from smoking meth.

There is more than one way to cook meth. Either method leaves contamination residue many times greater than meth smoking does. The reasons are simple. First, the chemicals involved in *making* meth contaminate surfaces much greater than *smoking* and, second, 67% to 90% of the meth "smoked" is consumed by the body of the smoker. Thus, contamination to air and surfaces is much less from smoking than it is from manufacturing.

How much of a health risk (danger) meth smoking contamination poses to inhabitants is uncertain. But the safe route is to clean a property if sample readings are above the standard used in Colorado before habitation is again allowed.

A problem for the property owner of the house in the Avenues is he does not know who he can trust here in Cheyenne. A police chief has exaggerated the problem involving meth in the house and the Board of Public Utilities, with an escort of the CPD officer(s), forcibly entered his house and removed the water meter with no formal authorization, no need and no justification. Two mayors have stood silently by as the Avenues house was slandered in the Legislature, pretending that it had been a meth lab (a "clandestine methamphetamine laboratory," according to Bob Fecht) when the house had never been used to actually manufacture meth.

After discussions today (June 12) with people involved in the issue of meth clean-up, etc., it has become apparent why Bob Fecht continues to assert that this house was a meth lab when he knew better. A "meth lab" allows certain government intervention (like the break-in?) that a "meth house" does not.

The sadness of this situation is that Fecht's behavior has set the clean-up of this house back by several years. Had he not rode the coattails of this meth house to new legislation that does not even affect this particular property, the owner would have willingly and eagerly dealt with clean-up in 2004 or 2005.

But Bob Fecht's need to use the house as his steed to claim at least one successful piece of legislation in his otherwise undistinguished tenure in the Wyoming Senate obscured his good sense and sense of honesty to this owner. Fecht's first attempt failed but, when brought back in 2008 (before he was forced to step down from the Senate by a new mayor), he had had another year

to spread his falsehood that the house was a "meth lab" and to lobby with his peers about a fictional need for funds for remediation of this specific house.

Once the bill passed, Fecht went underground - as far as applying those available funds to this house. Why? Because when push came to shove, he could not prove to anyone's satisfaction that the house was the "meth lab" it was required to be to attract the remediation funds.

Before getting to the specific levels of meth contamination in the house, let me review some findings of studies performed to determine the level of contamination from meth smoking compared to meth cooking (manufacturing).

Before I explain that difference, let me repeat an assertion I have made about this issue: Based on several discussions with users of meth and those involved in the detection and clean-up of meth contamination, it is my position that there are hundreds of houses in Cheyenne (including apartments and motel/hotel rooms) that are contaminated with detectable levels in excess of the allowable standards in either Utah (.1 ug / 100 cm²) or Colorado (.5 ug / 100 cm²). I am more convinced than ever, after these latest discussions, that my assertion is accurate. Using Utah's standard of "clean," there are almost certainly in excess of 1,000 contaminated homes in Cheyenne.

"Methamphetamine Contamination on Environmental Surfaces Caused by Simulated Smoking of Methamphetamine" is the title of a controlled "smoke" under the direction of the National Jewish Medical and Research Center (NJMRC). The project was conducted in Thornton, Colorado, in an abandoned motel which had been purchased by the City of Thornton. Also taking part in the project was the North Metro Drug Task Force and Tri-County Health Department.

NJMRC had conducted a previous test involving a single "cook" of meth, using two different methods. A single cook using the red phosphorous method "may result" in surface area contamination to as high as 860 ug/100 cm². 860 ug!

Health impacts of exposure of meth smoke is relatively unknown. In Wyoming, unless a property is a confirmed meth lab, there are no provisions nor requirements for clean-up or prohibitions prohibiting renting or selling a property known to have been a "meth house." Only **meth labs** require clean-up and they are identified by the presence of equipment and supplies used in the manufacture of meth at the time of the bust.

In the NJMRC test, four "smokes" were performed. 100 mg of meth (to simulate normal usage) to 2000 mg (to simulate a large number of smoking sessions) samples were used. (*Meth was frequently smoked at the Avenues house.*) Wipe samples were taken after each "smoke" in the NJMRC study. (*The sampling done by NJMRC was similar to what was conducted at the house in the Avenues about three weeks ago. Here, a Utah lab was used to analyze sterile wipes used on 4x4" sampled areas here.*)

At the motel room in Thornton, five areas had "very low positive results to .10 ug/100 cm²" **before** any test "smokes" were done.

Samples taken from motel room floor tiles after all four "smokes" tested to 35 ug/100 cm². Samples from a countertop and a table across the room (after all four smokes) tested as high as 17 ug/100 cm².

The study conclusion: **"The levels of methamphetamine found on surfaces within a house where it has only been smoked and not manufactured, will likely be much lower than a residence where it has been manufactured."**

A CPD officer told the owner of the Avenues house, after a possible break-in last Friday night, that a directive had been made to Cheyenne police officers that they were not to "go anywhere near the house" because of a high level of meth contamination. (*The CPD broke in in '07 to remove a water meter but can't go in to apprehend an intruder?*)

Bob Fecht has had no idea the level of contamination in that house. So, I will tell him:

One small room (where incoming meth was weighed and divided, and often smoked at the time) tested at 53 ug/100 cm². (*"ug" is microgram*) Other first floor rooms ranged from 8.1 ug/100 cm² to 28 ug/100 cm². A second floor bathroom was 10 ug/100 cm², a basement room 2.9 and a return air duct in the living room 3.3 - ug/100 cm².

None of these levels pose a proven health risk, based on my data. It stands to reason that those with respiratory problems, children with small lungs and pregnant women should not knowingly reside in a building known to have either frequent meth use or test results showing a high level of meth contamination.

None of the test results from the house in the Avenues approach the levels that would be left behind by a meth lab - slanderous utterances of a police chief notwithstanding.

Remember, one meth "cook" produced a surface contamination level of 860 ug/100cm². One! In Washington, heavy meth smoking in a used car lot office left a contamination level of 520 ug/100 cm².

What damage has a local police chief's lies and/or exaggerations caused to the owner of this house? Immeasurable. If the house were not "notorious," there is no requirement for the owner to spend thousands of dollars on cleanup of the interior. People are living in local houses and apartments, and staying in motel/hotel rooms every night, with levels of meth contamination equal to or in excess of the levels at the house in the Avenues. His (Bob Fecht's) directive to police officers to refuse entry into a structure he knows nothing about - in terms of levels of meth contamination - when they enter worse dwellings on a frequent basis, is unconscionable. There is a requirement for Fecht to list local "meth labs" with a federal registry. There is only one property listed. It is not the Avenues house.

BUY ONE AT REGULAR PRICE,
GET 2ND, 50% OFF!

APPLIES TO COMPLETE EYEGLASS PURCHASE - FRAMES AND LENSES

CHEYENNE'S ONLY FULL SERVICE OPTICAL WITH ONE HOUR SERVICE



In-Store Lab / Glasses made on Premises
Certified Opticians on Staff!

QUICK DRAW OPTICAL

1619 LOGAN AVENUE • 638-2298

Since 1981 ... Same Location