



Exposure Reduction Practices for Methamphetamine and Fentanyl Residue in Shelters and Housing Facilities

Table of Contents

Purpose of this Document	3
Health Effects	3
Is Decontamination Required by Law?	4
Assessment	4
Selecting a Cleaning or Neutralizing Solution	5
General Cleaners	5
Neutralizing Solutions	6
Bleach	6
Peracetic Acid	6
How to Reduce Your Exposure	6
Best Practices for Drug Residue Reduction	7
HVAC Systems	9
Prevention	10
Toxic Substances and Biological Hazards	10
Disposal of Substances	11

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If you see someone who may be overdosing, please address the emergency before managing any cleanup.

Make sure you know the signs of opioid overdose and how to administer naloxone (NARCAN). Naloxone is safe for all ages, including infants and toddlers, and should be given if there is any concern of overdose.

See the [instructions on how to respond to an opioid overdose response here](#).

Purpose of this Document

This guidance focuses on best practices to reduce exposures to methamphetamine and fentanyl residue in housing situations where you are not required to use a certified contractor for decontamination. In this document, residue means any form of methamphetamine or fentanyl leftover from use whether visible or not, including pills, powder, vapor or smoke build-up, liquid, skin patches, and drug paraphernalia.

This guidance does not provide detailed instructions for sanitation and hygiene but is intended to work with your existing processes and procedures to reduce exposure to environmental methamphetamine and fentanyl.

Health Effects

The use of methamphetamine or fentanyl indoors may leave residue behind and expose people to these substances. Drug residue may be left on household surfaces like furniture, as well as walls, ceilings, and floors, and even within an HVAC system.

Residue exposure has never been reported to cause death in adults. Documented health effects where use has occurred, such as rashes and headaches, are temporary and go away once those affected leave the exposure area. However, there are no available data on the health effects on residents or guests living in spaces or on workers with consistent exposure to methamphetamine and/or fentanyl residue. Younger children have a higher risk for unintentional exposure due to more contact with household surfaces through crawling and increased hand-to-mouth behavior.

Second-hand vapor or smoke from methamphetamine or fentanyl use has not been documented to cause an overdose. However, being around any kind of vapor or smoke is unhealthy. If someone has smoked or vaporized anything (including tobacco) in an indoor public setting, you can help reduce negative health impacts by opening windows and doors to get rid of the smoke or vapor.

Please refer to [Health Effects from Exposure to Methamphetamine and Fentanyl Residue](#) for more information.

Is Decontamination Required by Law?

This guidance focuses on situations where a shelter or housing facility is not required to use a certified decontamination process under RCW 64.44. The certified decontamination process is required if:

- There is illegal drug manufacturing, distribution, or storage. You can find more information from our [Drug Lab Cleanup Program](#).
- The levels of methamphetamine from use in a transient accommodation are equal to or above the state decontamination standard and your local health department has determined the property is unfit for human habitation or use.

Certified decontamination is not required in other situations. You still have the option to use a professional contractor for testing and decontamination. These certified contractors are often referred to as Clandestine Drug Lab (CDL) contractors. You may also follow the guidance in this document for exposure reduction practices.

Transient accommodations regulated by the Department of Health (DOH) are defined as facilities offering three or more lodging units for periods of less than 30 days and include motels and shelters (RCW 70.62).

While there is concern about exposure to drugs other than methamphetamine, including fentanyl, Washington does not have regulations that require fentanyl decontamination.

Surface Contamination Limits

Washington state
methamphetamine
decontamination standard: 1.5
 $\mu\text{g}/100\text{ cm}^2$

No state fentanyl standard
ACGIH fentanyl surface limit: 1
 $\mu\text{g}/100\text{ cm}^2$

Assessment

Observed drug use has occurred if you see someone using drugs, smell drugs, or see drugs or paraphernalia. If you want to confirm that drug residue is present in an area, [certified decontamination contractors](#) can help you with testing as well as cleaning. Your local health department can also help with information on testing. You can also take and send samples to a lab for analysis. The Department of Ecology has [a list of labs](#) that are certified to analyze for methamphetamine. There are no labs accredited by Ecology for fentanyl. Field test strips are also available to be purchased online but are not recommended. While field test strips can be accurate, they do not tell you how much of the drug is there nor can they test for other drugs. For example, a fentanyl test strip may not test positive for fentanyl-like substances. Different methamphetamine test strips have different detection limits, so they will tell you if methamphetamine is present, but not necessarily if it's above or below the WA state decontamination standard. Other home-test options may be less accurate and less sensitive to certain drugs or require more training to use. Given these limitations, using a certified decontamination contractor is the only way to accurately confirm the amount of drug residue present.

If testing finds that the level of methamphetamine is at or above the state decontamination standard of 1.5 $\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$, consult your local health department, who may require the services of a certified contractor. In addition to any testing data, they will take into account other information such as what other housing is available, costs of decontamination, and risk factors as in the box below.

Be more cautious and consider using a contractor if:



- Your space has been properly tested and high levels of residual methamphetamine or fentanyl were found.



- The residual methamphetamine or fentanyl is likely to expose people beyond the user, such as if it's in a common area.



- The residual methamphetamine or fentanyl is accessible to babies or children, pregnant people, or people who may become pregnant.

Selecting a Cleaning or Neutralizing Solution

Use the information below to choose an appropriate cleaning product for your facility. The information provided is on products that have been tested for their effectiveness at removing or breaking down methamphetamine or fentanyl. Inclusion in this document is not an endorsement of the listed products, but rather a summary of identified useful information. The products are not ordered by effectiveness or recommendation. Please visit [Drug Residue | Washington State Department of Health](#) for more information on these products.



This symbol on a label or other source of information means that the cleaner contains ingredients that are hazardous to the eyes. The cleaner may require an eyewash station and chemical splash goggles to use. Review the product Safety Data Sheet for more information and to see if an eyewash is required. Additional information on emergency eyewash requirements can be found at DOSH Directive (WRD) 13.00 Emergency Washing Facilities. L&I also has resources on [Eyewash and Emergency Washing Facilities](#); and you can contact them using eyeonsafety@lni.wa.gov

General Cleaners

General cleaners are useful for removing the drugs from surfaces, but they do not break down the drugs. This means the active drug may be in the wastewater or on the used cleaning materials, such as wipes. Some general cleaners have been tested and found to physically remove methamphetamine, including Formula 409 and Simple Green All Purpose Cleaner. While these cleaners have not been tested for physical removal of fentanyl, they may also physically remove fentanyl. General cleaners that are not listed but have similar active ingredients may have similar results.

There are highly variable data on products with hydrogen peroxide. They have been found to break down some methamphetamine and/or fentanyl, but the degradation is at a lower level and varies among products and studies. These products include some that are multi-part and require mixing, such as Apple Meth Remover and Bio-Oxygen Chem Decon. Other products with hydrogen peroxide do not require mixing, such as ZEP Professional Stain Remover with peroxide and OxiClean. Because of the variability and the lower levels of degradation, we have included these products with cleaners that work by removal.

Neutralizing Solutions

There are neutralizing solutions that break down methamphetamine and/or fentanyl that are more effective at removing residue in affected areas. However, neutralizing solutions can be difficult to use and require more personal protective equipment (PPE). Always follow label requirements for all products. Below is information on neutralizing solutions containing bleach or peracetic acid for which there are data on how well they break down methamphetamine and/or fentanyl. Products that are not listed but have similar active ingredients may have similar results.

Bleach

Bleach products have been found to break down methamphetamine and/or fentanyl.



Bleach products can be dangerous to inhale if they are mixed with other cleaners, ammonia, or acids. Visit [Dangers of Mixing Bleach with Cleaners | Washington State Department of Health](#) for more information.

Peracetic Acid

Dahlgren Decon and EasyDecon DF200 with peracetic acid have been found to break down fentanyl and/or methamphetamine. These multi-part products require mixing.

How to Reduce Your Exposure

If you're an employer or employee in a housing facility, there are Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) workplace rules to follow. If you are not an employer or employee, you can still follow L&I rules as a best practice. Here is information on the hazards of fentanyl in the workplace: [Exposure to Fentanyl Contamination in the Workplace \(wa.gov\)](#) and [How to Respond to Fentanyl Contamination as an Employer](#). You can reach out to L&I for more information by emailing eyeonsafety@lni.wa.gov. Employers can visit L&I's consultation information page to request a no-fee consultation to help address exposure to drug contamination in their workplace. Visit [Request Consultation \(wa.gov\)](#) for more information. Information in this guide does not replace any guidance given by your employer and/or L&I.

Physical Hazards: Needles or other paraphernalia may be present. If you see sharp objects, do not pick them up by hand. Use tongs, forceps, or other means to remove the items. If picking up by hand cannot be avoided, wear heavy work gloves that can prevent cuts or punctures and keep the point of the needle away from your body. Bring a sharps container (i.e., biohazard container) or other hard plastic container (e.g., laundry detergent bottle) to the location of the needle or other paraphernalia and put the sharp object into the container. Do not walk the needle or other sharp object to the container. Sharps containers are preferred for proper warning and disposal. Work with your local health department, partnered medical facility, local transfer station, or syringe service program for proper disposal.

We recommend avoiding actions that increase your risk of being poked by a needle or cut by a sharp object, like sticking hands behind couch cushions, in garbage cans, or in other spaces with poor visibility. Be cautious and go slow when removing items like cushions from a sofa or couch. Avoid picking up linen in bulk and don't hold it close to your body.

If you get poked by a needle, consult [Needlestick Injuries are Preventable | NIOSH | CDC](#) for more information:

1. Let needlesticks and cuts bleed while rinsing it for 10-15 minutes.
2. Then wash with soap and water.
3. Report the incident to your supervisor.
4. Immediately seek medical treatment.

Best Practices for Drug Residue Reduction

You can call a professional contractor to clean an area. If you are going to clean the area yourself, you can reduce the potential for exposure using the best practices below. Not all facilities will be able to implement all the best practices.

Personal protective equipment and products



Follow the product label's hazard warnings and instructions for PPE. Wear gloves and an N95 mask at a minimum. Some cleaning activities, such as pressure cleaning, may spread wastewater onto your body, so wear coverings or be prepared to launder clothes. Resist touching your face while cleaning and wash your hands with soap and water after, even if you were wearing gloves. Follow all product label instructions regarding proper dilution, application, rinsing procedures, and dwell time. Dwell time is how long a product must remain wet on a surface to be effective at cleaning. It's always a good idea to use the buddy system to watch for health effects. When possible, use disposable cleaning materials. If using reusable cleaning materials, ensure all portions of the cleaning material contacting the drug residue is removable and machine washable.

The following steps are for the use of general cleaning supplies. If you have access to a neutralizing solution, follow the manufacturer's directions.

1. Work with building maintenance staff to turn off the HVAC, if possible, and close off the area to prevent the spread to other people. See HVAC systems section for more information. After the prewetting step, you can ventilate the area by opening windows. Remember to put on gloves and a mask before you begin.
2. Prewet all surfaces, including porous and nonporous surfaces, by misting or low-pressure spraying with water before cleaning. This is to prevent the risk of drug particles from being spread into the air and becoming a breathing hazard while cleaning.
3. Remove and dispose of items that will not be cleaned, particularly porous materials that are very difficult to remove drug residue from. See the disposal section below. Move items outside that can be cleaned outside.

What is a porous surface?



Any material with pores, or holes, in which drug contamination can become trapped and is not easily wiped off. Examples include drywall, wood, furniture, and textiles.

4. Cleaning textiles (like furniture, window drapes, clothes):
 - a. When possible, machine wash porous materials such as textiles and rugs.
 - b. For non-machine-washable textiles, clean outside, if possible. Clean textiles by spraying cleaning solution and allow for the manufacturer's directed dwell time. If possible, use a pressure washer followed by wet vacuuming. If a pressure washer and/or wet vacuum tool are not available, scrub the material with more cleaning solution (as needed) with hot water. Allow the material to dry before moving it back inside.
5. Clean the area from top to bottom, focusing extra attention on frequently touched areas. Cleaning top to bottom will avoid respreading residue after an area has been cleaned.
6. Cleaning porous surfaces like wood and drywall:
 - a. Spray cleaner to wet down the surfaces of all accessible components.
 - b. Use abrasive scrubbing followed by wiping off the waste solution. Rinse the surfaces well.
 - c. Repeat washing and rinsing steps once.
 - d. If possible, use a wet vacuum to dry the material (like wood) to reduce trapped moisture and prevent mold growth.
7. Clean hard (nonporous) surfaces like glass, metal, or ceramic by spraying cleaner to wet down the surface and wipe off.
8. Unless you use a neutralizing solution, there is likely to be methamphetamine and/or fentanyl present in the wastewater and on your cleaning materials after the area has been cleaned. Do not allow wastewater to dry on surfaces before it is cleaned up - this will likely re-deposit drug residue on the surface if not removed. Collect the waste solution using a wet vacuum, bucket, or disposable cloths/wipes as available.
9. Follow all scrubbing of surfaces with [HEPA-equipped](#) vacuuming if possible once materials are dry. Do not vacuum with a non-HEPA vacuum as that can spread particles throughout the room.
10. Dispose of cleaning materials and PPE when done. See the disposal section for more information. Machine wash reusable cleaning materials, like rags, as described in step 4a. Make sure to continue wearing PPE while disposing of the used cleaning materials.
11. Consider having a contractor do follow-up testing after cleaning to check if the levels of contamination are below the state standard (listed in the [Assessment section](#)).

Warning!

Porous materials, like carpet and granite, may be impossible to decontaminate. Light fixtures and appliances may also be difficult to clean thoroughly. Consider replacing these materials if you have confirmed the surrounding areas have methamphetamine or fentanyl residue. We recommend disposal and replacement of porous objects that are used by pregnant people, infants, and children. Covering porous furniture with a new textile cover should not be considered as a substitute for cleaning. However, using washable furniture covers make it easier to keep porous surfaces clean if washed frequently.

Can I paint over methamphetamine residue?



We do not recommend painting over (encapsulating) methamphetamine residue, because methamphetamine can pass through the paint to the surface where people may be exposed. Encapsulation should never be done instead of cleaning and should only be considered after several rounds of cleaning have failed to reduce drugs below safe levels. EPA has guidance ([Voluntary Guidelines for Methamphetamine and Fentanyl Laboratory Cleanup | US EPA](#)) on painting after an area has been decontaminated. This guidance includes spray application of oil-based polyurethane paint, which is more effective at encapsulation than hand rolling or using brushes; however, this requires training and PPE. Please note that oil-based paint is an inhalation hazard and can irritate your eyes, skin, and lungs, so follow the PPE instructions on the product label.

HVAC Systems

HVAC systems can spread residue to areas where drug use did not occur. If one area contains residue, you should clean all other areas reached by the HVAC system.

If drug residue has been found throughout other areas of the building, it is likely your HVAC system is also affected. Work with building staff to turn off the HVAC system, if possible, before cleaning the residue-affected areas. This will reduce your potential for inhalation exposure by helping prevent fentanyl particles from being resuspended in the air while cleaning. It is also important to clean the HVAC system before turning it back on, to prevent spreading residue into the area after you've cleaned all other surfaces. External parts of the system, such as vents and bathroom fans will need to be cleaned as well. HVAC ducts lined with fiberglass or other insulation are porous and therefore cannot be easily cleaned. It is likely ducts with porous materials would need to be removed and replaced, if possible.

We recommend using a certified HVAC contractor to clean the HVAC system. Cleaning HVAC systems is a highly complex skill for which you need to be certified. CDL contractors typically are not certified to clean HVAC systems. Cleaning HVAC systems can be dangerous and pose a risk to your physical safety. Notify the HVAC contractor that the system may contain drug residue.

Turning off the HVAC system can cause unintended consequences, such as building pressure changes, and reduced air quality in areas not affected by drug residue. We recommend you work with maintenance staff to consider these additional challenges when turning off the HVAC system for cleaning.

Prevention

If you have the means to renovate your space, it is important to consider what you can do to make future cleaning easier and cheaper. A change to nonporous building materials, like replacing carpet with hard flooring (e.g. sheet, laminate, or vinyl tile) can help in any future cleaning processes. The use of nonporous materials, including furniture, can also prevent household pests like [bed bugs](#).

Keep your space clean going forward. Heavily soiled areas can make residue cleaning difficult. Consider adopting cleaning policies and procedures that will maintain your restored space.

Filters are available that can be placed over return air duct grills to limit the transport of a wide range of particulates into building ventilation systems. Based on what we know about particulate size, we recommend filters with a minimal efficiency reporting value (MERV) rating of 13 or higher, which are used to limit the transmission of infectious aerosols within building systems. These filters may be placed either directly inside of the return air duct grill or taped to the outside. MERV 13 filters are capable of removing up to 75% of the smallest hard- to- filter particles, with a much higher removal efficiency for larger particles. If your facility has the resources available, a HEPA filter will be more effective at removing methamphetamine and fentanyl particulates. However, consider the capabilities of your HVAC system - adding HEPA filters may reduce air flow and pressure throughout the system.

Toxic Substances and Biological Hazards

Toxic substances: Removal of drywall, flooring, or ceilings may expose you to chemical hazards. You should determine if there is lead or asbestos present on the property before beginning to clean drug residue.

Lead may be present in properties built before 1978. We recommend you get any potential lead-containing surfaces tested by a qualified professional. You can learn about lead contamination health effects, preventing exposure, and [common sources of lead on the DOH website](#).

Asbestos can create a breathing hazard if materials are damaged while cleaning or during renovation. Get any building materials in your space that will be impacted by these activities tested by an [AHERA-certified](#) asbestos reduction contractor. Visit the [DOH asbestos webpage](#) for more information on the health risks, sources of asbestos in the home, and resources for asbestos testing and restoration.

Other chemicals may be present in building materials that can cause an inhalation hazard if disturbed while remodeling. Visit the EPA webpages [Addressing Indoor Environmental Concerns During Remodeling](#) and [Steps to Safe Renovation and Repair Activities](#) for more information.

Biological Hazards: While cleaning you may be exposed to pests like [spiders](#), [bed bugs](#), and [rodents](#). Rodent droppings, urine, saliva, or nesting materials can carry dangerous viruses such as [Hantavirus](#). Wearing PPE such as gloves and a well-fitting mask can help keep you protected while cleaning.

Mold can also be present. When disturbed by cleaning, mold can create a breathing hazard. Visit the [DOH mold webpage](#) for more information on mold health effects, prevention, and cleaning.

Disposal of Substances

If you find unused methamphetamine or fentanyl, contact law enforcement to ask about disposal. How you dispose of the paraphernalia and cleaning waste depends on the amount of material, what size [waste generator](#) you are, and where you are in the state. If you use a professional contractor to remove drug residue, waste disposal is included in their services.

Waste that contains methamphetamine and fentanyl residue, along with most other controlled substances, is considered state-designated dangerous waste. Household waste and waste from small quantity generators are considered Moderate Risk Waste (MRW) that is managed at the county level, with regulations varying among counties and different MRW facilities. Check with your facility to know what size waste generator you are and how to dispose of dangerous waste. Visit [Generator category - Washington State Department of Ecology](#) for more information.

Follow your county's policies on sharps disposal. For example, King County requires supportive housing to have a biomedical waste disposal plan for sharps. Visit the King County [environmental health resources for homeless service providers webpage](#) for more information for King County.



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