

# THE RALEIGH POLICE DEPARTMENT

**1109-19**

## **CLANDESTINE DRUG LABS (“CLAN LABS”)**

### **PURPOSE**

To provide general guidelines for police officers on the scene of a suspected or confirmed clandestine drug lab (clan lab).

### **VALUES REFLECTED**

This directive reflects our values of Service and Courage. Clandestine drug labs represent a threat to the health and safety of those in the vicinity and to public safety personnel. We must deal with clan labs to keep people safe from injury and harm while processing the location as crime scenes to meet our commitment to seek justice.

### **UNITS AFFECTED**

All Divisions/All Personnel  
Emergency Communications Center  
Fire Department

### **REFERENCES/FORMS**

DOI 1109-16 “Response to Hazardous Material”

May be Released to the Public

Effective Date: 07-29-2024  
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City Manager

## **GENERAL POLICIES**

Clandestine drug labs usually come to the attention of police officers by one of three ways:

- When an emergency occurs, either fire or medical, which requires immediate response by public safety personnel.
- A police officer discovers a clandestine drug lab while conducting normal police duties.
- A concerned citizen or confidential informant provides information about a clandestine drug lab.

Officers will not knowingly enter a suspected clan lab with the exception of those personnel designated as clan lab specialists who have received advanced training regarding clan labs and are outfitted with gas masks containing the appropriate filters and other protective gear.

Regardless of how a clan lab is discovered, officers should detain all evacuated persons, as appropriate, for proper debriefing by a Drugs and Vice Detective.

The Drugs and Vice Lieutenant (or designee) is responsible for supervising all actions taken related to a suspected or confirmed clan lab, and will notify the SBI Clan Lab Team Supervisor prior to a clan lab investigation, if possible.

## **CLAN LAB INDICATORS**

The following items are signs or indicators of a clan lab:

- Large amounts of Pseudoephedrine or Ephedrine or empty containers (blister packs or bottles) for these medications.
- Red Devil lye (Sodium Hydroxide) in combination with other indicators listed.
- Large amounts of matches or matchbooks with the striker pads removed.
- Any solvent (Acetone, Xylene, Alcohols (Isopropyl, Denatured)).
- Starter fluid (for ether) or Camping Fuel in combination with other indicators listed.
- Lithium batteries that have been cracked open.
- Rock salt or regular salt in combination with other listed indicators.
- Acids like sulfuric or muriatic in combination with other listed indicators.
- Glassware such as flasks, burners, mantles and general laboratory equipment when seen with listed items.
- Pill washes (containers with clear liquid on top and whitish or reddish substance on bottom).
- Anhydrous ammonia containers.
- Any propane container with a robin egg blue valve.

- Strong smell of ammonia (similar odor to cat urine) or solvents from a location.
- Strong chemical smells coming from tubes or vents not of original construction on a home.
- Large amounts of Iodine, Iodine stains on hands and feet of subject in a home, around kitchen, bathrooms, etc.

Officers should be extremely cautious of any fire scene with the above items.

### **RESPONSE TO A CLAN LAB DISCOVERED BY PUBLIC SAFETY PERSONNEL**

When public safety personnel, such as Fire or EMS, responding to an emergency discover a clandestine drug lab, the Watch Commander will be notified by the Emergency Communications Center.

A clandestine drug lab discovered during an emergency will be treated as a hazardous materials incident.

The Watch Commander will coordinate with the on-scene public safety personnel and notify the Drugs and Vice Lieutenant (or designee), who will then initiate and supervise all further actions taken regarding the call, including contacting the SBI Clan Lab Team Supervisor.

### **RESPONSE TO A CLAN LAB DISCOVERED BY POLICE PERSONNEL**

If an officer discovers a suspected clan lab, the officer should immediately evacuate everyone at the scene to a safe distance in case of fire or explosion, preferably upwind and at a distance where odors emanating from the location cannot be detected.

Due to the potentially explosive nature of a clan lab, the officer should not touch, change, or alter anything at the scene. This includes turning on/off light switches or heat sources, or using the police radio or cellular phone; these actions could create an unintended and potentially dangerous spark.

- If the suspected clan lab is in the manufacturing process (or "cooking") – the officer should not attempt to shut off the heat source or stop the cooking process – the officer should evacuate the location immediately.
- The officer should not open or break windows or doors to ventilate the scene; this action may cause contamination of a greater area.

Once at a safe distance, the officer should immediately contact their supervisor and advise them of a suspected clan lab. The officer should be prepared to supply detailed information concerning the scene and measures taken thus far.

The field supervisor will notify the Watch Commander, who will ensure the clan lab scene is secure. The Watch Commander will notify the Drugs and Vice Lieutenant (or designee), who will then initiate and supervise all further actions taken regarding the call.

The Drugs and Vice Lieutenant will contact personnel who have completed and maintain current certification from the NCSBI or the DEA for Clandestine Laboratory investigations. An initial assessment of a suspected lab site may be made by certified individuals and this information will be passed on to the NCSBI Clan Lab Response Team and to the Drugs and Vice Lieutenant. A listing of currently certified personnel and their contact information will be maintained in the Department's Emergency Plan.

### **RESPONSE TO CITIZEN INFORMATION OF A REPORTED CLAN LAB**

When an officer or the Emergency Communications Center receives citizen information of a clan lab, the Watch Commander will be notified. The Watch Commander will immediately contact the Drugs and Vice Lieutenant (or designee).

When a citizen provides the initial information on a lab, detailed information about the stage of the lab, potential booby-traps, bombs, weapons, fortifications, or other imminent dangers should be obtained. If possible, a Drugs and Vice Detective should interview the citizen.

The Drugs and Vice Lieutenant (or designee) will initiate an investigation to determine the validity of the information and contact the SBI Clan Lab Team Supervisor.

### **RESPONSE TO PILL PRESSES**

While pill presses do not pose an immediate fire hazard like meth labs, pill press operations present a significant inhalation hazard to officers if found in a structure. If a pill press operation is located or suspected, contact should be made with on duty drugs and vice detectives. If no on duty drugs and vice detectives are available, the scene should be secured until drugs and vice detectives can arrive on scene and an assessment be made. Indicators of a clandestine pill press operation include:

- Pill presses that are large, automated units that can press 1000's of pills per minute or small manual presses that can produce 20-40 pills per minute.
- Bags of tablet binder.
- Large amounts of loose powder throughout the structure from the pill press operation. This powder will usually contain the controlled substance being pressed into the pills (i.e. – fentanyl).
- Stamps and dyes for a pill press. Some of the more common examples are the M30 pills seen on the streets containing fentanyl and Xanax bars.
- Large storage bags of finished pressed pills.

### **CLAN LAB CRIME SCENE INVESTIGATION AND CLEAN UP**

Once the presence of a clan lab is confirmed, the Drugs and Vice Lieutenant (or designee) will immediately notify other agencies as appropriate (i.e. Fire, EMS, SBI, DEA). The Watch Commander and appropriate District Commander will also be notified.

The SBI Clan Lab Team Supervisor will lead all evidence collection and disposal activities.

If a child was evacuated from a confirmed clan lab scene, a Special Victims Unit Detective will initiate a child endangerment investigation and make a referral to Child Protective Services.

Anyone that may have been exposed to dangerous chemicals, gases, or waste during the investigation will be checked by EMS for possible hazmat decontamination.

### **FOLLOW-UP ON CONFIRMED CLAN LAB**

The Drugs and Vice Unit Lieutenant (or designee) will notify the City Inspections Department and Fire Inspectors so that proper actions can be taken to prevent further exposure to hazardous materials. The City Attorney may choose to take action against the property owner, if appropriate.

If City Inspectors determine the property will be posted as "Unsafe for Habitation", the Drugs and Vice Lieutenant (or designee) will notify the District Commander of the posted clan lab.

- Arrests can be made if people are found inside a structure that has been posted as unsafe.
- Officers should not enter posted property without proper training and equipment.

The case agent (or designee) will maintain contact with the Wake County District Attorney and/or U. S. Attorney concerning case preparation activities.