Collection and Submission of Meth Lab Materials to DFS

An Excerpt from

Best Practices protocol for use by law enforcement and emergency response agencies regarding the clean-up of abandoned and deactivated methamphetamine production sites and the retention and handling of the byproducts of methamphetamine production

5. Safe packaging of evidentiary samples

- Only Certified Clandestine Lab Response Personnel shall collect samples from clandestine laboratories.

- A representative sample shall be removed from all precursor items, chemicals, and reaction vessels requiring analysis. Bulk items should not be submitted for analysis. Samples of those items shall be collected in a bottle assembly consisting of an approximately 25 mL glass vial with a Teflon-lined cap which is secured in an appropriately sized wide-mouth, high-density polyethylene plastic bottle. The glass vials should be filled no more than 75% to prevent breakage. Each bottle assembly shall be placed in a separate evidence container/bag and sealed. Under no circumstances should any metal containers be used due to the reactivity of many of the materials encountered.

- Liquefied ammonia gas will not be accepted by the Virginia Department of Forensic Science ("DFS").

- Lithium metal or sodium metal will not be accepted unless pre-approved by a Controlled Substances Section Supervisor at the DFS. Where final product is present or where two or more substances other than lithium metal or sodium metal listed in Code § 18.2-248(J) are found, submission of lithium metal or sodium metal will not be approved. If lithium metal or sodium metal must be submitted, a small quantity shall be placed in a bottle assembly consisting of an appropriately sized (at least twice the volume of the metal) glass vial with a Teflon-lined cap which is secured in an appropriately sized wide-mouth, high-density polyethylene plastic bottle. The glass vial containing the lithium metal or sodium metal shall be completely filled with mineral oil to prevent combustion of the metal. The bottle assembly shall be placed in a separate evidence container/bag and sealed.

- Items containing suspected final product (*e.g.*, meth oil, powder or solid material) may be submitted in larger containers. Dry items of suspected final product shall be secured in an inner container/bag and placed in sealed plastic evidence bags. Liquid items of suspected final product shall be secured in a leak-proof container and placed in a five gallon plastic bucket packed with vermiculite and sealed.

This bucket will serve as the evidence container upon submission to the laboratory.

- A copy of the evidence log/list and photographs documenting the items recovered at the scene shall be submitted to the laboratory with the evidentiary samples to facilitate substance identification and recognition of hazards. The Request for Laboratory Examination form ("RFLE") should associate the submitted evidentiary samples to the bulk items on the evidence log/list.

6. Transportation of evidentiary samples

- All samples shall be promptly hand-delivered to the nearest DFS laboratory.

- Sample(s) contained within sealed evidence container(s)/bag(s) shall be placed in five gallon plastic bucket(s) packed with vermiculite for transportation purposes. For samples other than lithium metal or sodium metal, more than one sealed evidence container/bag may be placed in each five gallon plastic bucket provided an ample amount of vermiculite is present for spill absorption. When approved for submission, each evidence container/bag containing a sample of lithium metal or sodium metal shall be placed in its own five gallon plastic bucket packed with vermiculite for transportation purposes. Buckets used solely for transportation should not be submitted as evidence containers. The buckets and vermiculite should be retained by the agency after submission and utilized when samples are retrieved by the agency upon completion of analysis.

- Liquid items of suspected final product that are sealed within five gallon plastic buckets may be transported as is.