



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
HALEY BARBOUR, GOVERNOR
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
ALBERT SANTA CRUZ, COMMISSIONER
BUREAU OF NARCOTICS
MARSHALL FISHER, DIRECTOR

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Mississippi sets standard for combating meth labs

The head of the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics says the state's eight-month old law banning over-the-counter sales of cold and allergy medicines containing pseudoephedrine, the main ingredient used to illegally produce methamphetamine, continues to be effective.

MBN Director Marshall Fisher says:

■ "MBN figures show a nearly 70 percent reduction in meth-related cases statewide. Officers seized 203 meth labs from July 2010 to February 2011, a 67 percent reduction from the 607 meth labs seized from July 2009 to February 2010.

"Twenty-four children were removed from meth lab sites from July 2010 to February 2011, which is an 83 percent reduction from the 141 children removed from meth lab sites from July 2009 to February 2010.

■ "When the MBN encounters pseudoephedrine in connection with a meth lab now, it has been purchased in a bordering state. Suspects are crossing state lines to purchase pseudoephedrine, bringing it back to meth cooks in Mississippi and trading it for meth or selling the pills for \$50 to \$100 per box.

"Some organized groups or "crews" are recruited strictly to buy pseudoephedrine pills. This criminal enterprise, known as "smurfing," actually has been enhanced as an unintended consequence of electronic monitoring and laws limiting sales of cold and allergy medicine containing pseudoephedrine. Authorities in states like Kentucky report that electronic tracking simply is not working.

"In recent months, MBN conducted meth operations with authorities in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana and Tennessee that led to 36 meth-related arrests and four meth lab seizures, as well as the rescue of three drug-endangered children.

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■ “Following Mississippi’s example, 10 states — Arkansas, California, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Nevada, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia — have filed bills to restrict the availability of pseudoephedrine. And six others — Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Missouri and Washington — have similar bills pending.

“It is obvious that Mississippi’s success has led other states to seriously consider prescription-only pseudoephedrine legislation. The folks that fought it here have gone to other states and implied that Mississippi’s success is due to reduced meth enforcement. That is false information designed to hide the truth: Prescription-only legislation works. While these misleading tactics work, children continue to suffer and die.

■ “Meanwhile, federal funds administered by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration in past years have helped to defray costs to state and local agencies for meth-lab cleanup, which involves the handling and disposal of hazardous materials. Funding has been halted due to federal budgetary constraints, and the Obama administration’s proposed budget does not include a request for continued funding.

“The cost to clean up a small lab is \$2,000 to \$5,000 just for hazardous material removal. For a large lab, the cost can be as much as \$25,000. Fortunately, because of the positive results Mississippi has enjoyed pursuant to passage of House Bill 512 the costs to our state and our taxpayers will be much smaller.”

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