



## Meth Menace-Inside a Raid

Posted: April 23, 2009 11:37 PM  
Updated: April 24, 2009 01:56 AM

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Another night, another search. It's a typical evening for the Coffee County Sheriff's Department as they hunt for one thing.

"Meth," says Sheriff's Deputy, Neal Bradley.

A meth raid. It's one of nearly 50 for the department in 4 months.



Sheriff Deputy Tony Harrison examines a glass pipe used to smoke methamphetamine.

"See it? It's methamphetamine," says Tony Harrison, as deputies test a substance found in one man's car.

Once again, they got exactly what they wanted--meth and its trappings.

"This is a glass pipe that's used to smoke methamphetamine," explains Harrison, now inside the house where the man lives.

As meth use increases statewide, Coffee County deputies take it seriously.

"Sometimes we'll go out everyday looking for people that's purchasing pseudos and manufacturing meth," says Harrison.

The raid is typically an end of what begins on a store shelf.

"Pseudos" or pseudoephedrine is an over the counter drug used to battle the common cold.

And federal law states the total amount of pseudoephedrine one person can buy in a day is 3.6 grams.

But because drug stores can't monitor what the other one sells, an undercover sheriff's deputy shows how easily meth users can beat the system.

"I'm going in to the pharmacies here in Enterprise, Alabama...numerous pharmacies to buy the maximum amount of pseudoephedrine," says the investigator.

Start with "Store A." The deputy comes out with two boxes.

"Total of 2.88 grams," he says.

Now on to "Store B," where clerks don't know he's already close to the daily limit.

"I just bought a box of 96 tablets, 30 mg each tablet, 2.88 grams."

Within 30 minutes time the undercover investigator purchased 5.76 grams of pseudoephedrine. That's 2 grams more than the daily limit per person. And it all came from drug stores within a block of each other.

And he says anyone can do what he did.

Users think they're beating the system, but the system's actually beating them. Every time a person buys pseudo, they sign a store log. And even though pharmacies can't keep track of each other's logs, Lieutenant Deke Skinner does. With logs from every drug store in Coffee County, he makes note of who's buying and how much.

"In order to catch someone actually manufacturing methamphetamine, you have to do this on a daily basis," says Skinner.

To aid in the daily hunt, sheriff's deputies are also taking part in a pilot program. It's called MethCheck, and it's the first one in Alabama. It allows law enforcement and drug stores to monitor pseudo purchases electronically, in real time.

"If they're trying to buy more than they're allowed to legally, the system will tell the store, this person cannot do this because they're over the limit," says a MethCheck representative.

And while they may only find one gram of meth this time, it's another user off the streets and on his way to rehab, as Coffee County deputies do their job.

"I don't think there's a better team nowhere," says Harrison, after a long night of meth hunting.