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Minister for Social Housing

Increase of methamphetamine contamination guidelines

This paper provides you with information about Housing New Zealand's intention to increase its methamphetamine contamination threshold in line with the Ministry of Health's interim guidelines which will be published in October 2016.

Current practice

Housing New Zealand currently uses the Ministry of Health's (MoH) "Guidelines for the remediation of clandestine methamphetamine laboratory sites." These establish a currently acceptable level of methamphetamine residue post remediation as 0.5 micrograms per 100sqcm. These guidelines are used widely throughout New Zealand as a de facto standard.

Methamphetamine Testing and Remediation Standards Development Committee

Housing New Zealand is taking part in the "Methamphetamine Testing and Remediation Standards Development Committee (P 8510)" administered by the Ministry of Business, Innovation, and Employment in conjunction with the MoH and other departments and industry experts. This committee was established in May 2016 to address a need for guidance on methodologies, procedures, and other supporting material that will ensure a consistent and effective approach to managing, testing, and remediation of contaminated properties. Importantly, this committee will establish a new standard which will inform what level of contamination is considered safe in homes. It is expected that the Committee will report the new standard by mid-2017.

As part of the Committee's process, Housing New Zealand understands that MoH will publically release an addendum to the current guidelines in October 2016. This interim guideline will supersede the current guideline of 0.5 micrograms per 100cm², and increase the level to 1.5 micrograms per 100cm².

Housing New Zealand's standards

Housing New Zealand has considered raising the threshold it uses for its tenancies ahead of the Committee's report next year. It sought independent scientific opinion, however, Housing New Zealand could not establish a consensus amongst appropriately qualified experts. It was also considered that unilaterally using an interim guideline would open Housing New Zealand to significant reputational risk.

Therefore, Housing New Zealand continues to support the current New Zealand Standards development process and intends to follow its interim guidelines in October 2016.

Implementation

An October 2016 implementation date for MoH's new interim guideline would enable Housing New Zealand to update its relevant processes and address a number of implementation risks in the two month window before the update would be published. In effect, Housing New Zealand would be ready to fully implement the guideline as soon as the release was made. Even if Housing New Zealand were to implement its own interim threshold immediately, this work would still need to be done before it could 'go live' with the new threshold.

Housing New Zealand will keep you updated as it prepares for the interim guidelines to be release from MoH in October 2016.



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