

AH 17 047

5 May 2017

Minister Responsible for Housing New Zealand
Associate Minister for Social Housing

Update on Housing New Zealand methamphetamine contaminated properties

You have asked for additional information on the business implications of differing levels of methamphetamine contamination in Housing New Zealand properties.

Background

On 27 October 2016 the Ministry of Health (MoH) released interim guidelines to be used for the testing and decontamination of methamphetamine contaminated properties until a final standard is established by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE). The interim guidelines are:

- 0.5 µg/100cm² for houses where the drug has been manufactured
- 1.5 µg/100cm² for houses where the drug has only been used – where soft furnishings remain (for example, carpet)
- 2.0 µg/100cm² for houses where the drug has only been used – where soft furnishings have been removed.

Properties tested positive for contamination

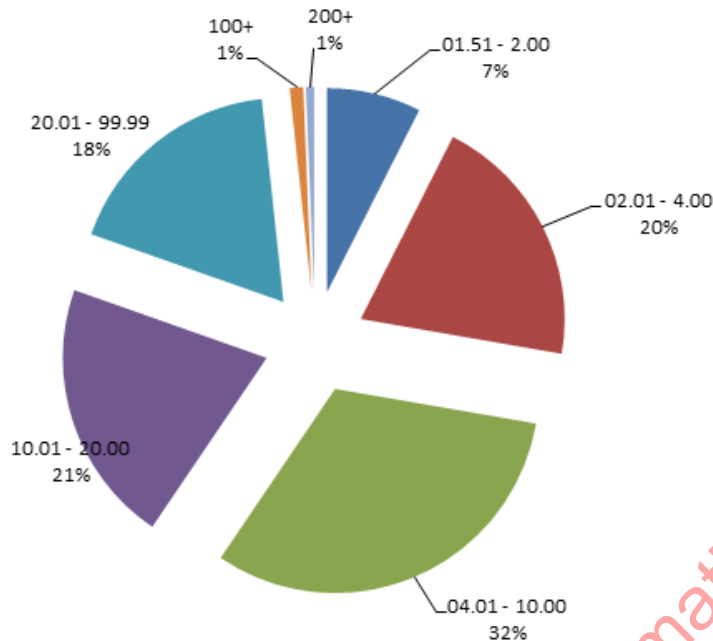
As at 10 April 2017, the test results for properties confirmed contaminated are broken down below:

Housing New Zealand contaminated properties as at 10 April 2017

Contamination levels (µg/100cm ²)	Properties
1.51 - 2.00	35
2.01 - 4.00	95
4.01 - 10.00	149
10.01 - 20.00	98
20.01 - 99.99	84
100+	5
200+	3
Grand Total	469

Note: There are a further 65 properties not included in the above table and the below chart that were confirmed contaminated prior to 27 October 2016, when levels of methamphetamine contamination were below the current interim MoH guidelines of 0.5-1.5 µg/100cm².

Suspicion Testing - Positive Results



These figures are initial tests undertaken on suspicion of contamination. These do not include re-testing after a property has been decontaminated, or baseline tests before selected tenants move into a property.

Housing New Zealand has changed the way it tests its properties for contamination, and as a result can reduce turn around times between these tenancies. Previously, Housing New Zealand took one sample per room. It is now taking additional samples as there can be variation in contamination levels between different surfaces. Often surfaces with higher contamination results are varnished/polyurethane surfaces such as doors or windows. As such, only these types of surfaces may need to be removed and other areas of the property can be washed. Because of this Housing New Zealand is recording an increase in properties testing over $20 \mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$, but is not indicative of an increase in the actual severity of contamination in properties.

Business implications of interim guidelines

Fewer properties that test above new guidelines

- Between July and October 2016, of 599 properties tested, 297 tested above the former MoH guidelines (49 percent).
- Between November 2016 and March 2017, of the 696 properties tested, 313 tested positive above the MoH interim guidelines (44 percent).

Fewer properties requiring decontamination saves time and retesting costs

- Fewer properties required to go through the decontamination process means more homes for tenants. Compared to 2015/16, Housing New Zealand will save up to \$2 million in lost rent and re-testing costs.
- Turn around times could be reduced by about 10 weeks as less work would be required to decontaminate a property.

MBIE, as part of its work to establish a Standard for the testing and remediation of methamphetamine contaminated properties, is considering a single-level guideline of 1.5 µg/100cm². Operationally, a single-level guideline would be simpler to implement, as properties could be tested and remediated to one level, regardless of whether the property was contaminated due to manufacture or use, or whether or not the property has soft furnishings. This would create clarity for Housing New Zealand staff and its contractors and provide clear guidance as to what is considered safe in our properties.

Housing New Zealand is currently undertaking work to update its analysis regarding the specific affects of a potential single-level of contamination. Housing New Zealand will be in a position to provide more information about this in the coming weeks.

Tenant health and safety

As a matter of health and safety, if a property tests positive for methamphetamine contamination above the MoH guidelines, Housing New Zealand will move the tenant out of the property within the provision of the requirements of the Residential Tenancies Act. Housing New Zealand will determine on a case-by-case basis if a tenant should be moved if areas where the exposure to the contamination may be limited (such as garages).



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