

Announcement of new Methamphetamine testing and remediation standards (NZS 8510)

Report number	BN/17/038
Date	28 June 2017
Priority	Normal
Security level	In Confidence

Action sought

	Action sought	Deadline
Minister for Social Housing	<p>Note MBIE's announcement of the new standards for testing and decontaminating Methamphetamine properties in New Zealand and what the impact is for Housing New Zealand.</p> <p>Note Housing New Zealand will be adopting these standards immediately.</p> <p>Forward this briefing to the Associate Minister for Social Housing.</p>	At your earliest convenience

Contact for discussion (if required)

Name	Position	DDI Mobile	Email	First contact
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For Minister's Office
<input type="checkbox"/> Noted <input type="checkbox"/> Approved <input type="checkbox"/> Not approved <input type="checkbox"/> Other
Comments

BN/17/138

28 June 2017

Minister for Social Housing

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Executive summary

On 29 June 2017, The Ministry for Business and Innovation (MBIE) will publicly announce new standards for testing and decontaminating methamphetamine in New Zealand properties in accordance with NZS 8510.

The purpose of this paper is to advise Ministers of how MBIE's announcement of NZS 8510 impacts on Housing New Zealand.

To advise Ministers that Housing New Zealand will be adopting the new standards immediately, and to advise the Minister of any potential operational risks

Recommendations

It is recommended that you:

- a) **Note** the contents of this paper
- b) **Note** that the committee has agreed on the accepted level of methamphetamine in an affected property and the new standards for testing methamphetamine have changed
- c) **Forward** this paper to the Associate Minister for Social Housing.



Paul Commons
Chief Operating Officer

Hon Amy Adams
Minister for Social Housing

Date

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Background

- 1 A committee of 21 representatives from relevant organisations was formed in June 2016 to develop NZS 8510. This committee represented laboratory and testing companies; decontamination companies; local government; central government; property management; the insurance sector, and an accreditations body.
- 2 In October 2016 the Ministry of Health (MoH) recommended new standards for methamphetamine contamination that was welcomed by Housing New Zealand. Previously, New Zealand had only one set of agreed national guidelines for methamphetamine contamination. As a responsible landlord, Housing New Zealand applied those guidelines as there was no other guidance available to assist us in safeguarding the health and wellbeing of families who live in our homes.
- 3 The previous MoH guidelines were of 0.5µg per 100 cm². In October 2016 MoH recommended new guidelines: 2.0µg – for contamination caused by use where carpet has been removed; 1.5µg for contamination caused by use where carpet remains; and 0.5µg for contamination caused by manufacture.
- 4 As a result of NZS 8510, it was decided the standards should change, as there was no consistent guidelines on the methods and procedures involved in what makes a home safe to inhabit post methamphetamine-contamination. Companies offering property testing and decontamination across New Zealand have been working to different guidelines, creating confusion in the marketplace for cleaners, landlords and tenants.
- 5 The high volume of public comments which had to be considered and addressed by the committee has meant that the publication date for NZS 8510 was been moved out to June 2017 (from April 2017).

New Standards

- 6 The committee has decided to set the maximum acceptable level of methamphetamine in an affected property at 1.5µg/100cm² after decontamination.
- 7 While this level is greater than MoH 2010 guideline value of 0.5ug/100cm² for properties used as clandestine laboratories, there are a number of reasons why the committee decided to adopt the single value of 1.5ug/100cm².
- 8 The committee adopted a single value as other than by expert scientific opinion, it is currently not possible to determine whether or not a property has been used as a clan lab, based solely on the results of surface sampling.
- 9 A level of 2.0ug/100cm² was not considered conservative enough by the authors of the Institute of Environmental Science and Research (ESR) review for a clan lab site, and it was likely that some properties would be decontaminated to this level when in fact production of meth did occur but there was no clear evidence remaining on the property.
- 10 ESR and MoH acknowledge that a post-decontamination level of 1.5ug/100cm² or less is appropriate to minimise exposure risk to occupants including young children, because of safety margins built into ESR's October 2016 risk assessment and recommendations.
- 11 **Note:** the standard allows for a limited use area level of 3.8; an area that is likely to be accessed only by adults and for short periods of time. This includes crawls spaces and wall cavities not used as duct runs that are unlikely to be renovated.

- 12 The standard sets maximum acceptable levels of methamphetamine to guide decisions on decontamination. The level for high-use areas, such as bedrooms, living areas, kitchens, bathrooms, laundries and shed/garages is 1.5 micrograms per 100 cm² (1.5 micrograms of methamphetamine per 100 square centimetres of surfaces sampled). For limited-use areas, such as crawl spaces likely to be accessed only by adults for short periods of time, the level is 3.8 micrograms per 100 cm².

What do the new standards provide? - Embargoed 29 June 2017.

- 13 The new standards provides guidance on methodologies, procedures, and performance criteria aimed at ensuring the methods of testing properties for the presence of methamphetamine provide reliable results, and the decontamination of contaminated properties is effective, reduces harm, and enables properties to be safely reoccupied.
- 14 The standards will contribute to the reduction of risks to the health and safety of occupants and others who may be exposed to methamphetamine contamination. Application of the standards will provide assurance that activities such as screening, sampling, testing, assessing, and decontamination of contaminated properties, and disposal of their contents, are carried out in accordance with good practice.
- 15 Information that supports verification processes is included, which provides assurance that testing and decontamination of properties, and disposal of contaminated materials have been effective.
- 16 The standards introduce a two-stage process for sampling and testing for the presence of methamphetamine. This involves an initial screening assessment stage to determine if methamphetamine is present above the limits in the standards, and a detailed assessment stage to quantify the level and extent of methamphetamine contamination in a property.

Operational realities

- 17 Housing New Zealand predominantly tests under suspicion and our methamphetamine team says there is no major impact on Housing New Zealand operations.
- 18 Since November 2016 Housing New Zealand has cleared all properties within the tolerances of the revised MoH guideline (October 2016).
- 19 As at 31 May 2017 Housing New Zealand had 257 properties that had tested positive above the new standard. They will be returned to the letting pool as they are decontaminated.
- 20 Currently, Housing New Zealand has two suspected clan labs both are currently undergoing decontamination and levels are still well above the 1.5. Those will be now required to be cleaned to 1.5ug/100cm². Soft furnishings have already been removed.
- 21 Housing New Zealand have tested 26 properties between 1.51 and 2.0 where soft furnishings had been removed in the whole property (in most cases) and properties were cleared in line with the MoH revised guideline (October 2016)
- 22 There are a further 82 properties that are suspected of being contaminated with methamphetamine and were awaiting testing as at 31 May 2017.

- 23 The rate of positive results received on suspicion testing has reduced to 54% from 61% prior to November 2016.
- 24 A room by room approach will have the greatest impact on decontamination and particularly reinstatement costs; this should also positively impact on the turnaround times.
- 25 Rooms tested above the acceptable levels of contamination will have soft furnishings removed while the remainder of carpets will be required to be commercially cleaned.
- 26 **Note:** where carpets are in poor condition removal may be a more cost-effective option still. Where methamphetamine labs are suspected, work may be required; this will be assessed based on the levels and other factors relating to meth manufacture in the affected property.
- 27 There has also been an increase in detections as a result of Housing New Zealand: improving its processes for identifying methamphetamine in our properties; better information sharing with the NZ Police and other agencies; being more proactive toward sampling; and, upskilling staff to help them better identify methamphetamine use. By adopting the new standards, Housing New Zealand will continue to improve on detection.

Operational risks

- 28 The risks for implementing the new standards are minimal for Housing New Zealand; however, Housing New Zealand may be looking at delays receiving clearance certificates post decontamination.
- 29 This is due to possible inconsistency of document quality that will be required now to be supplied by the decontamination contractor which includes the clearance certificate.
- 30 Housing New Zealand will work to bring the contractors up to speed as quickly as possible, but with the inability to have access to the final draft to share with contractors not part of the committee, we foresee initial teething problems with the big change.

Housing New Zealand's responsibility

- 31 Housing New Zealand will be sure to demonstrate that we are adopting the new standards and our operational systems support our tenants during this time. We will provide clear and timely information to Housing New Zealand's internal and external stakeholders regarding the process of the standards' development.
- 32 Housing New Zealand will ensure our communication messages are aligned with those of MBIE, MoH, Ministry of Social Development, Local Government New Zealand, and Ministry for the Environment, the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- 33 Housing New Zealand has prepared clear and accurate information in advance to enable timely responses to the media.
- 34 Housing New Zealand will provide letters to all IANZ accredited testers to alert them of the new practice and advise them that the new standards are mandatory.