

Disposal of belongings left at a meth-contaminated property

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Business Alert for All People and Property Team, Tenancy Liaison Team and Chemical Team.

When tenants leave or abandon belongings at one of our properties, we cannot legally dispose of their goods unless we have written permission from them, or the Tenancy Tribunal has given us permission to do so.

When a meth contaminated property is vacated, the Chemical Team cannot proceed with decontamination work until all issues of abandoned belongings/ rubbish are resolved and the items are removed. The potentially contaminated waste and belongings left behind can pose health and safety risks to the general public, as well as often attracting negative publicity for Housing New Zealand.

To minimise the risk, the vacating tenants need to sign a new letter 05-111 'Disposal of Belongings from Meth Property', after notice has been given/ received and before they vacate. In this letter (attached), the tenant gives Housing New Zealand permission to dispose of any belongings and rubbish left at the property, as contaminated waste. The Chemical Team will organise the external rubbish removal as soon as practicable, following the notification of the tenant moving out (PHO-071: see below).

The 05-111 letter should be used in the following four situations:

- Where a tenant is given a 7DN under RTA s59 but has decided to vacate rather than accept a BIT
- Where a tenant is given a 7DN under RTA s59A and no Business Initiated Transfer (BIT) is offered.
- Where a tenant is given a 90DN under RTA s51 (1) (d) and will be vacating
- Where a tenant gives us 21 days notice.

For cases where the tenant is going to receive a BIT, they will also be asked to sign a letter to give permission to Housing New Zealand to remove abandoned belongings when they vacate the house. We will release these (two) new letters soon.

To speed things up when the tenant moves out, this is the process:

1. Tenancy Manager to take photos of the external grounds (from the street) in order for rubbish removal and lawn maintenance to be organised promptly
2. Tenancy Manager to send email (template PHO-071) to the Asset Manager and Chemical Team (ChemicalRequest@hnzc.co.nz) along with the photos of the external grounds and signed 05-111 letter. PHO-071 has been updated and moved from the 'Asset Management' group to the 'Tenancy Services' group, under the Meth Add-Ins in Outlook
3. Chemical Team to organise rubbish removal (if required) as soon as practicable. Once all external rubbish and belongings are removed, Chemical Team will advise the Tenancy manager to release the lawn maintenance work order.

If we do not have a signed 05-111 letter from the tenant, we have to wait until permission is granted by the Tenancy Tribunal to dispose of the abandoned belongings (refer to T-237 Abandoned goods guideline). However, if there is excessive rubbish left at the property as indicated by the photos, Chemical Team can request for rubbish to be piled at the back of the property (not visible from the street) until such approvals are available. Please liaise with the Chemical Team about any exceptions to ensure timely and practicable solutions to manage the risk.

In all cases, where a property is awaiting a test or confirmed as contaminated, the external grounds should be treated as contaminated and appropriate PPE gear should be worn to carry out the work.

Caution should be exercised for any risks around fire pits, burnt out areas, hazardous materials etc. The Maintenance Delivery Team should liaise with the Chemical Team to get an update on rubbish removal and check with them before lawn maintenance work order is released.

This business alert has been authorised by Renáta Latimer, Senior Programme Manager (Meth and Fire).

If you have any questions or feedback, please direct these to the Chemical team at ChemicalRequest@hnzc.co.nz.

To access this or any other business alerts, go to the OurSpace homepage or visit the A-Z reference and view by topic.

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- Content author: Debra Cheriton
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