

Sherriff's Department busting meth labs with LeadsOnlabs MethMonitor

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Meth makers are getting around a law created four years ago that limits the amount of pseudoephedrine they can buy. That's a substance in cold medicines that people can use to make the dangerous drug.

This year, sheriff's offices across central Arkansas are reporting an increase in meth labs, including Lonoke County where they've already busted six labs since January.

Lieutenant Jim Kulesa with the Lonoke County Sheriff's office says you can only buy 9 grams of pseudoephedrine a month. But people who run labs have started getting around that by asking other people to buy it for them out of the area, so it's harder for authorities to track.

"If we can prove that point, we will charge them with conspiracy to manufacture methamphetamine," explained Kulesa. And Kulesa is seeing more anhydrous ammonia meth labs which he says can be more explosive than others.

"You've got adults with children making meth in their own homes and they could blow themselves up along with the kids," said pharmacy manager Kyle Lackie.

Lackie knows the physical signs of meth use and says more people fitting the bill are showing up in his Lonoke pharmacy. "At one time they'd ask, 'Do you have any of that long acting cold medicine?' They'd kind of go around it. But now they just come up and ask you about it (cold medicine with pseudoephedrine)," Lackie told us.

The good news is even though more people may be making meth, a computer database is helping police keep track of who buys what, and how much. Every time someone comes in to buy pseudoephedrine, pharmacists have to scan their ID into the **LeadsOnlabs** System. Authorities say this database is helping them crack down on meth labs across the state.

Lt. Kulesa said people will always find ways to get around the law and that's where regular citizens come in. If you know of a lab or see anything suspicious let police know.

FOX16 checked with several other counties to see what kind of problems their dealing with. Pulaski County Sheriff's officials report a slight increase in meth labs, seven labs so far this year compared to ten in all of 2008.

In Faulkner County, Conway police say these days, small scale, personal use meth labs are more common than large meth labs for profit. But there are no hard numbers yet for 2009. They're also noticing more ice, a highly potent form of meth, being imported from Mexico and California.

Jefferson County is also reporting more ice coming in from out of the area, but sheriff's officials say they've only had six to eight labs over the past year and the pseudoephedrine law seems to be working.

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