



CHARLES E. BRANSON
District Attorney
Douglas County, Kansas

TELEPHONE (785) 841-0211
FAX (785) 832-8202
www.dgcoda.com

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY

SEVENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT
JUDICIAL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT CENTER
111 E. 11TH STREET - LAWRENCE, KS 66044-2909

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Dear Douglas County Citizens:

I am contacting you today regarding the recent discovery of a methamphetamine lab in the wooded area around the Prairie Park Nature Center. I am grateful the Lawrence Police Department and the Lawrence/Douglas County Fire and Medical with the assistance of area agencies did a great job of insuring this mess was safely removed and disposed.

While what was found in Lawrence was more of the traditional items used for the creation of meth, I believe the discovery of these items warrants a discussion on the new and unfortunate reality of what many communities around our country are learning. The days of meth cooks needing large and elaborate facilities to cook their toxic drug are gone. In order to skirt laws that have restricted their access to the necessary ingredients, meth cooks now have a new "shake and bake" method of cooking their drug. This method is so new, not everyone will recognize the warning signs if they would stumble across the remnants. I am particularly concerned about the hazard this new method poses to children. I do not want a naturally curious child to pick up one of these discarded containers.

This new method only requires a two-liter soda bottle, a few handfuls of cold pills and some assorted noxious chemicals. The criminal can carry these things in a backpack and create the drug on the run. After they finish mixing the drug, they will often ditch the bottle which now contains a very poisonous brown and white residue.

If you or a member of your family stumble across something you believe may be the remnants of a meth lab or a discarded meth bottle, do not touch the items, do not shake them and do not move them. Contact the police department or the sheriff's office and let them handle removal of the container. They may need to have a hazardous materials team clean up the mess.

If you would like to know about meth, please go to:
<http://www.justice.gov/dea/concern/meth.html>. Please note this site has not yet been updated to include information on the "shake and bake" method.

I hope this information is useful to you and your family. Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you would like additional information.

Sincerely yours,

Charles E. Branson