



Roy Cooper North Carolina Attorney General

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Contact: Noelle Talley
Phone: 919/716-6413

Meth labs down, but fight against drug not over, Cooper says

National Meth Awareness Day highlights need to fight trafficking and addiction

Raleigh: With meth labs down thanks to a new law that makes it more difficult for criminals to get the drug's main ingredient, North Carolina is stepping up its efforts to fight drug traffickers and meth use, Attorney General Roy Cooper said today.

"We've made it harder for criminals to make meth here in North Carolina," said Cooper. "Now we must step up our attack on criminals who're bringing drugs and violence into our state."

November 30th has been designated as National Meth Awareness Day by the U.S. Department of Justice and attorneys general across the country.

Since a new law Cooper helped win to fight meth labs took effect on January 15, 2006, the State Bureau of Investigation has seen a 40 percent drop in meth labs compared to the same time period in 2005. In 2005, SBI agents busted 283 labs between January 15 and November 28. In 2006, agents busted 172 labs between January 15 and November 28.

Meth is a highly addictive and toxic drug that can be made at home with a few household ingredients, including pseudoephedrine, a common cold remedy. The secret home labs are filled with poisonous fumes and liquids, and can cause deadly explosions.

Specially trained SBI agents respond to meth labs discovered in North Carolina. Agents removed 95 children from homes where meth was being made from January 15 through November 28, 2005, compared to 38 children found in meth labs during the same period this year. Children in these homes are threatened by toxic chemicals, fire and explosions, and are often neglected or abused.

The new North Carolina law pushed by Cooper requires that all single and multi-source tablets, caplets or pills containing pseudoephedrine and ephedrine be sold behind a pharmacy counter. Purchasers must be at least 18 years old and show a photo ID and sign a log to buy these products. The law also limits purchases of these products to no more than two packages per transaction and no more than three packages within 30 days without a prescription. Federal law now says that liquid and gel caps that contain pseudoephedrine must be sold from behind a counter or a locked cabinet, but other elements of North Carolina's stronger law remain in effect here.

"Fighting meth means rooting out labs and cutting the flow of drugs into our state," said Cooper, "It also means working to stop people from ever getting hooked on this terrible drug."

As part of the push against traffickers, Cooper has directed the SBI to build on its existing partnerships with local and federal law enforcement to boost efforts to go after large drug operations that bring meth, cocaine and other drugs into North Carolina. The SBI has established a statewide coordinator and assigned an Assistant Special Agent in Charge in each of its eight districts across the state to better coordinate drug investigations, and is working with local officers to identify problem drug dealers and to establish drug trafficking task forces in communities. The SBI also plans to develop a database of drug intelligence specifically to track traffickers.

During the upcoming session of the General Assembly, Cooper plans to ask legislators for more SBI field agents to investigate drug trafficking and related crimes.

To prevent meth use, Cooper helped form the Methamphetamine Prevention Partnership in September 2006. Cooper's office is working with the Partnership to develop a DVD and resource guide to educate communities about the dangers of meth addiction. Along with the NC Department of Justice and the SBI, partners include the University of North Carolina School of Social Work, the Alcohol/Drug Council of North Carolina, Partnership for a Drug Free North Carolina, Families in Action, and the state departments of Health and Human Services, Juvenile Justice, and Public Instruction.

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