31 August 2016

**Introduction**

In 2015, Standards New Zealand prepared a proposal for Local Government New Zealand and the Ministry of Health to apply for funding under the Criminal Proceeds (Recovery) Act 2009 to develop a standard on the testing and remediation of properties used for the manufacture or use of methamphetamine. Funding of $60,497 was granted in December 2015.

The development of the standard is aimed at addressing a need for guidance on methodologies, procedures, and other supporting material that will ensure a consistent and effective approach to managing the testing and remediation of affected properties and treatment of their contents including:

- guidance on testing properties and contents for contamination
- methods of assessing risks to health, safety, and the environment from meth-related chemicals and contaminated material
- best practice procedures for decontamination and remediation of properties and contents to acceptable levels
- methods of disposal of materials that cannot be decontaminated
- information that supports auditing processes, which provide assurance that testing, risk assessment, decontamination and remediation of properties, and disposal of contaminated materials have been effective, and comply with legislative requirements.

**Q. Why is the standard necessary?**

**A.** Methamphetamine, or crystal methamphetamine hydrochloride (pharmaceutically referred to as methylamphetamine or desoxyephedrine), is a powerful and highly addictive synthetic drug. Methamphetamine is synthesised or ‘cooked’ in makeshift laboratories, using precursor substances such as ephedrine or pseudoephedrine as key ingredients. Both acute (short-term) and chronic (long-term) health effects can arise from the manufacture of methamphetamine. Acute exposure effects may come about through direct contact with the product or waste and inhalation of the product or waste. Burns, tissue irritation and rashes can be the consequence of chemical spills and skin contact. Other health effects such as nausea, dizziness and headaches can result from the inhalation of vapours and gases.

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The surrounding environment is contaminated by the toxic chemicals and can cause health problems for people who, for example, buy a house that has been used to cook methamphetamine or has had methamphetamine users living in it, or tenants who move into a property that is contaminated.

The problem has been growing for some years in New Zealand and elsewhere. Correspondingly, there is a growing number of companies being established that offer property testing and decontamination services. There is currently no consistent approach to testing and decontamination and there is an absence of quality control measures. There is also debate on safe levels of contamination that enable properties to be reoccupied. The standard will address these issues.

Q. **Why does a standard need to be developed when there are already Ministry of Health guidelines?**

A. The Ministry of Health guidelines were developed in 2010 and only address properties that have been used as meth laboratories. The standard will be much broader (see the introduction above) and will also cover properties that have been inhabited by methamphetamine users.

Q. **How will the standard be developed?**

A. A committee has been formed to develop the standard and has now had three meetings on: 29 June; 25 July; and 23 August. There are articles in our e-magazine Touchstone on what was involved at each meeting. The first meeting mainly involved discussing the committee’s terms of reference, including the scope, process, and time frame of the project, and planning the work ahead. The second meeting included reports back from the five working groups each developing key parts of the standard. At the third meeting the committee heard from two guest presenters, considered comments on the first working draft of the standard, and discussed further developments on key parts of the standard being prepared by the five working groups of the committee. The next meeting is scheduled for 27 September.

Q. **Who is on the committee?**

A. There are 21 members on the committee. You can view the listed members of the committee in our e-magazine Touchstone.

Q. **How was the committee formed?**

A. Following our usual procedure consistent with the Standards and Accreditation Act 2015 provisions, Standards New Zealand invited a wide range of organisations to nominate representatives for appointment to the committee. We received over 34 nominations, many more than could be accommodated in a single committee. We have a committee of 21 consisting of members with a range of skills, knowledge, and experience relevant to the standard.
Q. **Which organisations were sent invitations?**

A. A wide range of organisations from various sectors were sent invitations including laboratory and testing companies; remediating companies; local government; central government; property management; accreditation; and other interested parties such as police.

Q. **How were the 21 on the committee selected?**

A. Standards New Zealand initially selects members from the nominations received – working to ensure the committee has balanced stakeholder interest, has a good mixture of expert knowledge and experience, and reflects the perspectives of those who will use the standard including property owners. Their final appointment to the committee, however, is determined by the independent Standards Approval Board under the Standards and Accreditation Act 2015 (the Act).

Among other things, the Act directs that the Board has to be satisfied that membership of a standards development committee constitutes a balanced representation of the various stakeholder interests relevant to the proposed standard, and ensure that each member has the skills, knowledge and experience relevant to the standard, or knowledge and experience of the sector or sectors likely to use the standard. Potential committee members are also required to disclose any conflicts of interest, and have a continuing duty to disclose conflicts of interest.

Standards New Zealand is also forming an informal reference group which will consist of people who expressed an interest on being on the committee. This group is intended to be a source for the committee to bounce ideas off and test things out in the course of the development of the standard.

Q. **Why are there meth-testing, cleaning, and lab verification businesses represented on the committee?**

A. These representatives have the technical expertise and knowledge that is needed on the committee. They will also be among the users of the standard, or those who will have responsibilities to meet its requirements.

Q. **How does Standard New Zealand decide what background/reference documents to put before the committee?**

A. The 27 background documents Standards New Zealand has provided for the committee includes some material provided by committee members themselves, as well as reference material that may include scientific research that Standards New Zealand has become aware of and which the committee may find helpful when drafting the standard.

Standards New Zealand stresses in the committee’s terms of reference that all standards have to be based on sound evidence (i.e. not just on individuals’ opinions) and lists in the final standard all reference material that the committee has used to develop the standard. This will include other standards and guidelines from other countries, as well as published scientific papers. SNZ gives no consideration to ‘balancing’ documents provided to the
committee. It is not their role. Documents are simply collected and provided to the committee to refer to as reference material, if they choose to use it.

Q. *Who will use the standard?*

A. The most likely users of the standard will be:

- meth testing and clean-up/remediation companies
- laboratories that analyse samples taken from meth-contaminated properties
- health, safety, and environmental regulators
- property owners, managers, and insurers

Q. *Will they have to use the standard?*

A. At this stage the standard will be voluntary. Companies that use the standard will be following minimum best practice that has been developed by experts in their fields.

Q. *What happens now?*

A. The committee will meet over the next few months to develop a draft standard. There will be a 2-month period where the standard is available for public comment which is currently scheduled for October/November this year. The committee will review the public comments and prepare a final document.

The process of developing a New Zealand Standard follows accepted international standards practice (for example, ISO and IEC), which includes consensus decision-making as well as the opportunity for a 2-month public comment period. The process aims to be inclusive and transparent.

The final standard has to be approved by the Standards Approval Board, which has to ensure that due process has been followed. The Board has to have regard to specific considerations in the Standards and Accreditation Act 2015 when approving a standard – including for example that the standard has been developed using a consensus process and whether due weight was given to submissions received from the public consultation process.

Standards New Zealand is aiming to publish the final standard in early 2017 which is within the usual development time for a New Zealand standard (12 months).*

Q. *How will I know when the public consultation period is open?*

A. Draft standards are posted on our website during the public comment period. If you would like to be notified when the draft of NZS 8510 has been posted, you can subscribe to Standards New Zealand’s free electronic services, Touchstone and Keep me up to date.

Q. *How will I know when the standard has been published?*

A. Publication of the standard will be notified on our website, in Touchstone, and in Keep me up to date.
*The time taken to develop a New Zealand standard by Standards New Zealand is generally shorter than standards developed by other standards bodies such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (about 3 years) and Standards Australia (about 2 years).*