

The image of the meth addict as an incurable and hopeless case is an inaccurate portrayal that could lead to inadequate treatment and prevention efforts. In order to reduce meth's impact on society, it is important to attack demand as well as supply. While law enforcement and legislation can seriously diminish the supply of meth, treatment programs and prevention efforts target the demand. Only through a comprehensive effort can a true difference be made in the fight to eradicate this drug.

Myth #3: Comprehensive federal precursor legislation is not needed

Despite the obvious successes of precursor legislation at the state level, the federal government has been unable to craft a similar package to establish a baseline of compliance nationwide. Why does such a baseline matter? First, it would create a mandatory minimum of restriction for states. **Dale Woolery**, Associate Director of the Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy in Iowa, stresses that differences in precursor restrictions in the states surrounding Iowa are responsible for patterns in clandestine lab occurrences around the state. The interior areas of Iowa have seen a drastic drop in meth lab occurrence since the passage of precursor legislation.

However, the eastern side of Iowa, which borders on the Mississippi River and Illinois, initially saw a much smaller drop than the rest of the state. According to Woolery, this occurred primarily due to less stringent precursor restrictions in Illinois. When meth cooks in the eastern part of Iowa discovered they could no longer purchase their ingredients in Iowa, they simply drove to Illinois to procure their needs.

The same occurred in Oklahoma. Operators of "Mom and Pop" meth labs would drive to Texas or Arkansas to buy their components. Now that most states have instituted precursor legislation, this problem has been mitigated somewhat. However, due to discrepant policies allowing the purchase of varying amounts of precursors from state to state, there are still incentives for cooks to cross state lines. Federal legislation would create a minimum level of precursor restriction in all states and would immediately help diminish indigenous meth production.

Methamphetamine and its associated problems are incredibly complex. To adequately manage this drug requires collaboration between many organizations, along with a concerted political effort.

However, if misperceptions such as those listed above persist, the effort will be much more difficult. Effective response to this threat requires accurate and proactive information sharing coupled with a concerted community-wide response.

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High Gas Prices, Tough Choices

If you read *American Police Beat*, you already know that the high cost of fuel is forcing cash-strapped law enforcement agencies to make some tough choices.

And the struggle continues. Police departments, especially in small jurisdictions and rural areas, are beginning to feel the pinch of the recent hike in gas prices.

For instance, the Memphis Police Department has reported that it's already \$1.2 million over its gasoline budget for 2006.

In addition to keeping cruisers gassed up and on the road, the skyrocketing costs of heating is also adding to budget woes for local governments all across the country. But thanks to some forward thinking, some law enforcement agencies were prepared for the increase.

"It gets expensive to pay \$40 to \$50 for a tank of gas. It adds up in a hurry," said one police commander. "Now multiply that times the 30-plus cars in the police fleet and you have a fuel bill that is on the rise."

Many economists are predicting that gas prices will continue to climb through the summer when gas consumption is at its highest.

Most of the proposed solutions to the gas crunch involve reductions in vehicle patrols and sending more cops out on foot or on bikes. But, that's a quick fix at best and most say that police chiefs and managers must begin adjusting to the high fuel prices when creating their budgets.

In addition to the challenge of keeping police vehicles on the road, cops are facing another challenge related to the high price of gas.

Many jurisdictions are reporting a two-fold increase in gas thefts, mostly in "drive offs" — where the suspect pulls in, pumps gas, and never pays a cent.

In addition to drive-offs, officers in California have reported an increase in incidents where motorists run out of gas on the highway on purpose in order to get free gas from tow truck operators or emergency personnel.

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