



Meth, Cartels Growing Problem for Georgia

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ATLANTA - Georgia has a growing problem with meth and Mexican drug cartels. A massive \$44 million meth bust this week in Norcross, exposed what some call a looming danger in metro Atlanta's northern suburbs.

This week's raid of a Gwinnett County home uncovered a half ton of meth.

Experts said it, and a similar raid in Duluth last year, should serve as proof that Atlanta has become a hub for meth trafficking.

For the most part, investigators say, gone are the days of small labs in rural areas. Now those labs have been replaced by massive amounts of meth, coming from Mexico.

FOX 5 was there early Tuesday morning, as crews began the dangerous job of seizing \$44 million worth of meth out of a Norcross home.

"This is a drug five times more powerful than cocaine. This is a drug that has taken over," said Jim Langford, of the Georgia Meth Project.

Langford is the executive director of the Georgia Meth Project, the group behind a powerful set of ads, produced to steer teens away from the drug.

Langford and federal DEA agents say meth is actually moving into suburban areas like Gwinnett and Cobb Counties at an alarming rate.

Once considered a rural drug, local meth production came to a staggering halt, when the state legislature made it harder to buy ingredients together over the counter.

That, experts say, is when the Mexican drug cartels got involved.

"The cartels have figured out this is a drug they can make fairly quickly, fairly easily," Langford said.

Langford estimates 80 percent of the meth on the street today, is Mexican made. Then it's moved to Atlanta and stored in suburban neighborhoods on its way to buyers all over the east coast.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, for every pound of meth made in a makeshift meth lab, there are five to six pounds of toxic byproduct. The dangerous chemicals are left behind in the house or the yard, that people living near by, may not know about.



The DEA's website keeps a [national meth lab register](#) and by county, residents can find addresses where meth labs were known to be working.

The site also lists meth house warning signs including a strong chemical smell, windows that are blacked out, and excessive trash or unusual amounts of clear glass containers.

Langford's biggest fear, though, is teenager's attitudes may already be changing, because more meth is here.

"If the drug is readily available and 35 percent of young people think there's no risk to trying this drug, that's a recipe for instant disaster in this state," said Langford.

A Georgia Meth Project survey released this year, not only found that 35 percent of Georgia teenagers see no risk to trying meth, but 28 percent said it would be somewhat easy for them to get it.

One man was arrested in this week's Norcross raid. Investigators say it appears he was working for a Mexican drug cartel.