

Eugene homeowner's dream ruined by drug residues



(AP) — Tom Wilson's mobile home overlooks a lush valley.

It's a beautiful place to live, but Wilson has moved out. His home, he discovered, was contaminated by drug residue because it was used as a methamphetamine factory before he bought it.

"It's like living in a treehouse," Wilson says. "It's real hard to walk away from it, and that's what I have to do."

Wilson is one of hundreds of Oregonians who have unknowingly lived in homes used earlier for the manufacture of methamphetamine, authorities say.

After Wilson signed the real estate contract, he found out from authorities that his home was contaminated by residues from the operation of a methamphetamine laboratory four years earlier.

Wilson said he can't afford to pay the several thousand dollars it would cost to meet state health standards for cleaning up the mobile home.

So after living there one-and-a-half years,

Wilson, an insurance claim adjuster, has left for a job in Portland.

Ed Wilson, the state Department of Environmental Quality's emergency response project manager, said hundreds of people likely are in the same position.

He has a list, dating back to 1987, of about 675 houses that his office helped clean up after they were raided.

Oregon State Police say those houses represent just a fraction of the numbers involved in methamphetamine manufacturing since the mid-1980s when methamphetamine cooks invaded Oregon.

"I think that it would be safe to assume that we only get a small percentage of those meth labs," said Detective Jeff Howard of the Oregon State Police drug enforcement section.

Someone shopping for a new home likely wouldn't know a particular house had been used to manufacture drugs, Ed Wilson and Howard say.

Since 1990, state law has required the cleanup of methamphetamine labs.

Mark Gano, who heads the State Health Division's Clandestine Drug Lab Cleanup Program, has compiled a list of 162 houses

used to make the drug since then. About 70 percent of those homes have been issued certificates of cleanliness, he said.

His list is available to realtors, but that still leaves a large number of unidentified former drug homes.

Many home shoppers, Tom Wilson said, won't recognize the smell of the drug residue — and they won't check the list of residences used as drug factories.

"When I bought it, it had been vacant for eight months and the window was open. It had a dirty bathroom smell, and I just thought they had little boys," he said. "I didn't connect it with any hazard."

He thoroughly cleaned the master bathroom after he purchased the house in November 1991, but the smell didn't go away. He said that's when he started to suspect a problem.

He soon found a police report showing the house had been raided and nine people arrested in November 1987 on accusations of manufacturing and distributing methamphetamines.

Tom Wilson paid a private company for tests that revealed his house is contaminated with lead and mercury, the residues

of methamphetamine production.

Government agencies have put Wilson's house on a list of those that require cleaning before they are certified fit for human habitation.

Wilson says it will cost about \$9,000 to clean the house and several thousand dollars more to replace items such as carpeting and drapes.

He is suing the seller of the house and the realtor to recover costs.

Tom Wilson said he was forced out of the mobile home because of headaches and bouts of dizziness he attributes to the chemical residue. The symptoms went away when he traveled out of town on business, he said.

Authorities disagree on how dangerous the drug residues are. In serious cases, some people could develop kidney and liver damage, and children could suffer learning disabilities from long-term exposure, Gano said.

"The long-term health hazards come out 20 years down the road," Howard said. "I wouldn't buy a house, under any circumstances, that had had meth cooked in it."

School finance bill not as helpful as expected

SALEM (AP) — The Legislature's school financing dispute moved a step closer to ending Monday as the Senate's budget panel approved a bill adding \$48 million to the House-passed version.

But there's a catch.

Just \$10 million of the increase is actually in the bill.

The other \$38 million amounts to a footnote saying lawmakers will obtain that money from any increased revenue. That could come from income tax collections, lottery proceeds or other sources.

The Senate Ways and Means Committee voted 8-2 to send the bill to the full Senate after partisan wrangling over the footnote.

Democrats turned aside a Republican attempt to add wording to say the Senate and House would reduce state agency budgets by enough to ensure that the

'We can't say what the Legislature will do. God knows what the Legislature will do.'

— Sen. Frank Roberts

\$38 million will be left over for schools.

The latest school finance bill was worked out last week by Senate Democrats and Republicans. House Speaker Larry Campbell, R-Eugene, has said he expects the revised measure will win House approval.

The bill totals \$1.37 billion in state school support for the 1993-95 fiscal period. That's \$552 million less than in the current two-year budget period and \$68 million less than proposed by Gov. Barbara Roberts.

An earlier bill passed by the House was a one-year budget. If extended to both years of the coming budget period, it would

have cut money for schools by \$600 million below the current level.

John Marshall, lobbyist for the Oregon School Boards Association, said the group was gratified that the Senate version of the bill appeared headed for approval.

"We're obviously extremely pleased that at least one body of the Legislature would recognize the cuts proposed are indeed drastic," Marshall said.

But he said schools still face a growing problem as the Measure 5 property tax limit drains more money from the state budget. The association recently announced it would begin a signature-gathering drive to place a

5 percent sales tax for schools on the November 1994 ballot.

The Republican plan to reduce other agency budgets was rejected after Sen. Frank Roberts said the Senate can't bind itself or the House to vote in any particular manner.

"We can't say what the Legislature will do. God knows what the Legislature will do," the Portland Democrat said.

Sen. Lenn Hannon of Ashland argued against the proposal by his fellow Republicans, saying it was a waste of time.

"Let's not play charades here and say, 'Read my lips,'" he said.

But Sen. Stan Bunn, R-Dayton, said the proposal was merely an effort to make an informal budget agreement more binding.

"I've heard five different understandings of what the agreement is," he said. "It can't stand on a handshake alone."

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dence. Boston University has introduced a letter signed by King in 1964 in which he named the university where he earned his doctorate as the repository of his papers.

The letter said BU would receive full ownership of the papers upon King's death.

The university's lawyers also played the jury a tape recording of a news conference at which King spoke of giving the papers to BU.

Dr. Howard Gotlieb, the university's director of special collections, testified that while Mrs. King has repeatedly asked for the return of the papers, King himself never made such a request.

King died without a will.

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