

Meth: Responsible for many crimes

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When asked if he has ever stolen a car, he says, "Yes, I've stolen a car."

When asked what his biggest crime was in order to get drugs, he shares ashamedly, "I broke into a music equipment warehouse once."

Tewee said that crime was enticing because of the prospect of mass quantities of drugs.

"While doing it, I was excited because of the fact I would get more drugs than I ever had in my life, and I did."

His reasoning is common among the typical addicts. Crimes related to the need to get more meth happen every day.

"I would say the majority of the people we're holding in our jail are in there for methamphetamine or crimes associated with meth," said James Cole, criminal investigator with the Warm Springs Police Department.

Meth, according to Cole, is the number one priority for the Warm Springs police force. The reason being, he says, is the amount of theft, burglary, violence, child abuse, and child neglect all to often associated with methamphetamine abusers.

"We can't deny the connection between these crimes and meth," said Cole.

A glimpse into the recent Warm Springs past brings up the shocking and senseless murder of tribal member Michael Saludo. The murder happened in July 2001.

Saludo's three assailants pulled away his crutches, preventing his escape, and then proceeded to stab him multiple times. They sliced his throat, attempted to break his neck and stone him to death, according to the police investigation.

Finally, after multiple unsuccessful attempts to murder him for more drug money, they smothered Saludo.

All malefactors were under the influence of methamphetamines.

It's horrific crimes like these, said Cole, that typify methamphetamine use.

Users, said Cole, tend to not sleep. The lack of sleep has a lot to do with the psychotic episodes that typify "tweakers".

"Depending on the stage of use," explained Cole, "there is more paranoia. People at that stage snap on a moment's notice."

Tewee explains he needs 50 bucks just to get started.

"You know for the weekend. But a weekend can last a month," he smiles.

With that attitude the money needs to keep flowing, and anything goes.

This indulgent practice of continual use for days is known among addicts as "binging."

It was after an 11 day binge that a tribal member burned down his sister's house on Christmas Day of 2001. According to Cole, the perpetrator, suffering delusions, thought the Marines were after him, and he was trying to get away.

Neighbors said they saw him running around his sister's lawn as her house burned, ducking and doing rolls as if he were engaged in military combat.

Child abuse and neglect are rampant among users, and account for a good number of the criminal cases on the reservation, said Cole. Child pornography, he said, is often found in the meth abuser's home. Many people would agree.

occurred after an undercover police officer bought from a Warm Springs dealer, he was injured. Since then, he's had two back surgeries, shared Cole.

On the reservation, police officers enter a crime scene, assessing the scene for evidence of drug use, so they know

the violent murder that happened in the neighboring small town. Grandmas are hiding their purses from their grandchildren.

Warm Springs is not alone in its predicament.

Guy Wallulatum, drug and alcohol counselor in Warm

Producers use lithium strips from batteries to cause a chemical reaction, an extremely dangerous procedure. Only one drop of water in this mixture, says Dominguez, could lead to a lethal explosion.

A batch can be whipped-up in an hour.

usually get into some kind of legal trouble that will lead them to treatment. Very few will just walk-in and say they need help."

Wallulatum acknowledges drug and alcohol abuse on the reservation as a prevalent problem.

He feels alcohol, which he calls a legal killer, is a gateway drug. It can lead to more hardcore drugs like meth.

Tewee estimates he started drinking when he was 8 or 9 years old. His father was an alcoholic.

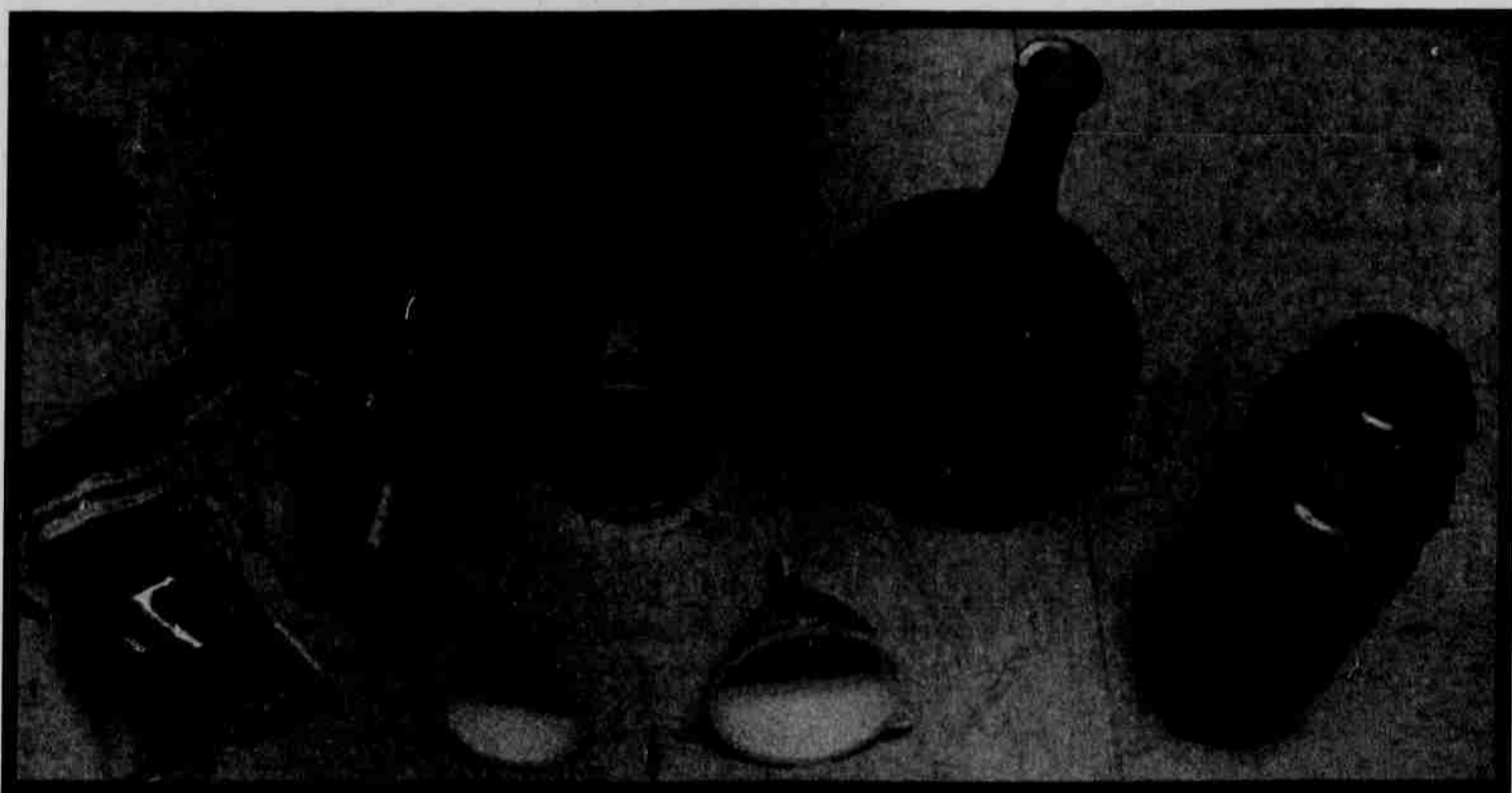
Many professionals agree that problems with alcohol often accompany the meth abuser's addictions.

At this time Wallulatum doesn't know of any rehabilitation centers that are specifically for meth.

Tribal members who develop meth problems usually find help outside of Warm Springs.

Says Wallulatum of rehabilitation programs, "Each person needs an individual treatment plan, for different levels of drug problems. Some are more severe than others."

He feels that if a person has faith, sweatlodges and other traditional forms of treatment can be very affective. "I see this type of approach more in the older people," he says.



Greg Stinson

Items found in the trunk of a vehicle on the reservation. It was determined that these items were being used by the person involved to make methamphetamine out of the trunk of the vehicle. This type of lab is commonly referred to as a "rolling lab."

"I've seen absolutely disgusting homes. It's hard to even put it into words. Homes less than five years old are completely destroyed. We're talking about rugs covered with animal excrement, food rotting on the floor of the kitchen, a rotting maggot-infested steak in the corner. Literally, carved pathways leading to the rooms through garbage, and I mean, raw garbage."

James Cole

Criminal Investigator, Warm Springs

what they are getting into. Signs they have learned to recognize are a person not able to be quiet; very animated movements and pupils dilated; exaggerated mannerisms; and, worse case scenario for the advanced addict, severe acne, also known as "meth sores."

Meth sores are caused by the chemicals trying to escape the user's body. The user perceives "bugs" crawling under the skin, and the user picks at these. Acne-like sores develop, sometimes turning into large open wounds.

"Also, if you know the person," says Cole about the small community he works in, and targeting meth users at crime scenes, "they are not acting like their normal self."

Regardless of risks for police officers, because of the high-risk crimes associated with meth use, given a choice between a marijuana or a meth offense, Warm Springs police force always chooses to address the latter first.

A plight of rural towns

Methamphetamine production and use, known as meth, crank, rock, CR, ice, or crosstos, is spreading its dismal wings across rural America.

Small town residents typically thought to be safe from crimes of the big city, are experiencing the same paranoia as city dwellers.

Doors and cars are locked to prevent auto theft. Bikes are no longer safe in the front yard. At nighttime houses are locked to deter the intruder and avoid

Springs, says since the 1980s methamphetamine use on the reservation has gotten progressively worse.

In Central Oregon, only a quick 15-minute drive up the canyon from Warm Springs lies Madras, a quaint town with a seedy underside involving methamphetamine production and distribution.

Ervey Dominguez, senior deputy for the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department, says Madras is the largest distribution point in Central Oregon. Much of the meth comes out of Washington, California, and the Willamette Valley. Basically, he says, the money goes south and the dope comes north.

Otherwise, meth labs, in trailers, businesses, houses, and cars produce the white to brown powder in rigged chemistry labs.

Afterwards it is distributed to the area's dealers, who then sell it to the users and the addicts.

Cole estimates, about 15 of those dealers are on the reservation.

"We're aware of about 15, but there are probably at least double that. That's a conservative number," said Cole.

But, says Cole, I haven't run into any Native American suppliers yet.

"Most of the lab busts around here are in Madras."

Commonly referred to as the "nazi method", the preferred clandestine home method produces a high potency methamphetamine.

Other meth is shipped into the United States from Mexico and various countries in Asia.

Methamphetamine production is often dependent on the availability of two precursor chemicals, ephedrine and pseudoephedrine.

It is buffered with toxic and harmful substances like Drano and lye.

"There are so many things in meth that are disgusting. It's hard to understand why anyone would want to knowingly put that into their body," said Cole.

In the past meth was made with acetone and phosphorus, which caused it to smell.

"Meth doesn't smell anymore because they no longer use these stinky chemicals," said Cole.

"Methods today are quicker, using fewer chemicals to make more meth in less time," Cole said.

On the reservation, meth labs are not a problem yet, and only two clandestine labs have been busted in Cole's time on the reservation.

"We found one in a car up at Kah-Nee-Ta, in which the person was not a tribal member.

He was making meth in his car and ripping off other cars in the parking lot," said Cole.

The other, he said, was a small-time operation out of someone's house.

The toxic process leaves buildings and cars uninhabitable without a cleanup, in which the average cost is \$5,000 to \$150,000.

Addiction, it's a family affair

Drugs, says Wallulatum, throw everything (in your body) out of whack.

Furthermore, all drug abuse leads to family and community dysfunction, exclaims Wallulatum.

"It's a family disease, along with child abuse and anger management," he says.

"We need chiefs and leaders of the community to speak out about it," says Wallulatum about substance abuse on the reservation.

"They (the younger generations) learn drug abuse from elders, and from seeing other people do it."

A former substance abuser, Wallulatum confidently explains the psyche of a drug addict.

"Most drug addicts will even-

Long, hard trip

Snorting or smoking lye and drano for 25 years can't be good for you.

Tewee says he doesn't feel any health affects from his years of drug use.

Yet, he has needle tracks where he shoots meth intravenously sometimes.

He coughs constantly throughout the interview.

A deep scar wraps around his upper arm where someone slashed him with a broken bottle during a fist fight. Another slash on his forearm is from a knife.

Meth addicts develop eye problems, have deep dark circles around their eyes, indicating kidney problems, and often lose their teeth.

The life of a drug addict shows its scars on the external physique. And internally methamphetamine users face detrimental damage.

Intravenous users are at high-risk for deadly diseases like Hepatitis C and the AIDS virus.

His own ghost

Long-term use of meth can cause damage to the dopamine producing brain cells. Dopamine is responsible for making humans feel good. Without dopamine production, feeling happy is not a possibility.

While high, users can suffer from delusions, paranoia, and symptoms that resemble schizophrenia.

Long-term use can result in bi-polar (manic-depression) and schizophrenia.

Tewee at first denied the drug has affected his mind in a negative way.

Later, he changed his mind and said, "I guess you are right. It does mess with your mind. You see things that aren't there."

He described a recurring shadow figure kneeling in the distance that he frequently sees while coming down from a high or when he is too high.

"It's really probably just my own ghost," he hypothesized.