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## Methamphetamine: What makes an epidemic?

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**Editor's Note:** This is part two of a four-part series examining the methamphetamine epidemic.

As the methamphetamine epidemic continues to grow and different regions across the United States compare facts and figures, experts working in public health related fields understand that no one area is unique – and no one is immune.

"We're seeing third generation meth users now," said Chuck Newport, the health education coordinator for the El Dorado County Public Health Department. "We all think we're the number one meth capitol of California."

Other counties across the nation feel the same way. A 2005 survey conducted by the National Association of Counties found public services listed meth as problem number one across the U.S.

"The key findings have shown that meth is the top drug threat to county law enforcement officials, and that meth is the largest drug that drives people to county public hospital emergency rooms," said Jim Philipps, the media relations manager for NACo. "The need for meth treatment is growing."

More than 50 percent of counties in the survey estimated that one out of every five inmates were incarcerated because of meth related crimes. Clearly the meth epidemic is not

confined to northern California.

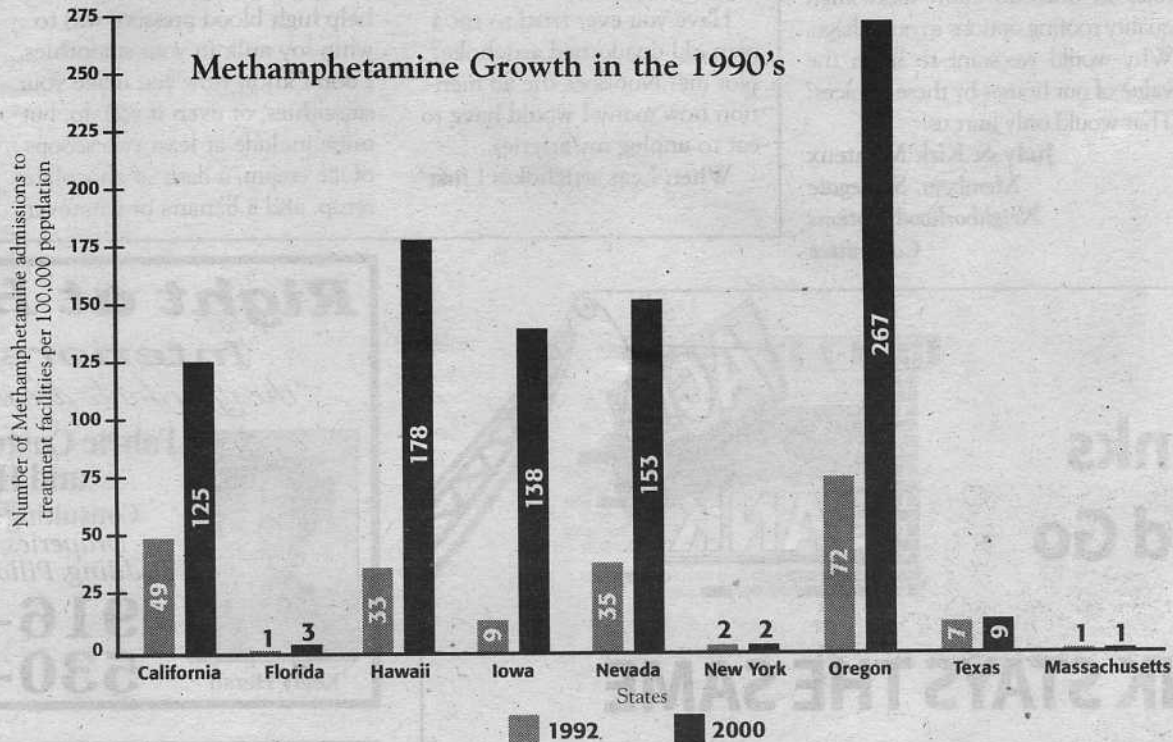
Originally manufactured as a cold medication, amphetamine and its related derivative, methamphetamine, has plagued the western United States over the last two decades. Made with multiple toxic substances, the euphoria-inducing drug leads to serious and even deadly health problems, and creates a severe addiction that is one of the hardest to beat.



Photo courtesy of EDC Sheriff – Narcotics

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THIS METHAMPHETAMINE BUST shows how the drug is separated and sold.



Source: Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration

