



# **Ohio State Highway Patrol**



## **Written Testimony**

**United State Sentencing Commission**

**Public Hearing – August 5, 2025**

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## **Testimony on Methamphetamine Trafficking Patterns and Enforcement**

### **Introduction and Background**

My name is Timothy B. Williamson, and I serve as a Sergeant with the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP). In my role, I have been actively engaged in narcotics interdiction and criminal investigations not only in Ohio, but across the country. The Ohio State Highway Patrol works in close collaboration with federal, state, and local partners to detect, interdict, and investigate drug trafficking and smuggling activities. A major part of these investigations includes methamphetamine trafficking, which continues to be a significant public safety concern in Ohio.

### **Trafficking Patterns and Trends**

In Ohio, methamphetamine trafficking has evolved drastically over the past two decades. In 2024, OSHP initiated 863 cases involving 513 pounds of methamphetamine, an increase of nearly 2,000% in cases and an over 3,000% increase in amount seized in the last 15 years (from 2010 to 2024). Prior to 2016, methamphetamine was often domestically produced in small-scale 'one-pot' labs using pseudoephedrine. However, since 2016, OSHP has observed a major increase in methamphetamine seizures originating from Mexico, with Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCOs) manufacturing the drug in industrial size super-labs. Prior to 2016, Methamphetamine produced only 2% of the illicit narcotic submissions to the OSHP Crime Laboratory. During 2016 the OSHP Crime Laboratory began to experience the impacts of super-lab methamphetamine, as crime lab reports climbed to 4.2%. Since 2016, lab submissions of methamphetamine continued to rise, and has remained the top illicit substance submission since 2019.

Methamphetamine is most likely to be encountered in crystalline form, commonly referred to as 'Ice'. Although, Methamphetamine is also smuggled in liquid or tablet/pill form. Liquid meth is often recrystallized after crossing the border from Mexico. Smuggling methods for all forms of methamphetamine, include hidden compartments in passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, fuel tanks, and the shipping/mailling of parcels.

### **Differences in Meth Type and Trafficking Organizations**

The type of methamphetamine involved; Ice, mixture, or actual has less operational distinction for enforcement agencies today, as nearly all street level meth is highly pure (above 90%). TCO's dominate both wholesale and retail supply chains, regardless of the form of methamphetamine. With my experiences, the large amount of highly pure methamphetamine being supplied at such a low cost, does not appear to correlate with changes in TCO structures or levels of violence.

## **Violence and Firearms**

Methamphetamine use, possession, and trafficking continues to pose a significant risk to officer safety. In the last 15 years, OSHP investigated over 700 meth-related cases involving firearms. In 2024 alone, 57 meth cases involved a firearm. Data provides 2.4% of meth cases in 2010 included the presence of a firearm, compared to 6.6% of meth cases in 2024. Just like the increase in the amount of methamphetamine seized, the number of these cases involving the possession of a firearm increased. These encounters often present heightened danger during traffic stops and interdiction operations.

## **Differences in Offenders**

Meth traffickers often have more extensive criminal histories than traffickers of other substances. We frequently see a mix of low-level couriers along with high-level distributors. The steady supply of high purity meth at low cost provides opportunity for members of any community to participate in localized distribution and sale of methamphetamine.

Federal data shows meth traffickers are more likely to be white and female compared to traffickers of other illicit drugs. Many of these traffickers play minor roles and received modifying role adjustments during sentencing compared to those individuals trafficking other drugs.

## **Identifying Purity During Enforcement**

Law enforcement officers in the field cannot accurately determine meth purity without laboratory testing. Field testing only provides officers with the ability to determine the presence of methamphetamine. Visual inspection, training, and experience is unreliable. Many times, illicit pills are not identified as meth until after lab analysis confirmation. Lab results, which are used for charging and sentencing, are not always immediately available, and may not be returned in time for court proceedings.

## **Sentencing Differences: Federal vs. State**

State sentencing in Ohio does not differentiate based on purity, focusing instead on total weight. Ohio being a “containing” state for prosecution, the law enforcement community has never concerned itself with the purity of the methamphetamine being tested. Federal sentencing relies heavily on the purity of methamphetamine, with mandatory minimums enforced at much lower weights for pure meth. This can result in significant sentencing disparities between jurisdictions, even though majority of all methamphetamine seized today is above 90% pure.

## **Comparison with Other Drug Traffickers**

Methamphetamine traffickers use the same smuggling methods and tactics as any other illicit substance trafficker operating within the United States. The one notable difference is meth traffickers often use different smuggling methods such as; (fuel tanks, liquid conversion) compared to traffickers of cocaine or fentanyl.

## **Impact on Local Communities and Closing**

During the first two quarters of 2025, methamphetamine cases in Ohio have continued to lead all other illicit substance. Methamphetamine trafficking remains a serious and evolving threat. Our enforcement efforts must adapt to disrupt new smuggling techniques and increased amounts of high-purity meth. A continued support for interdiction resources, lab testing capacity, and sentencing consistency is critical to public safety in Ohio.

The trafficking of high purity meth is directly linked to long-term community deterioration and addiction. The effects of large amounts of methamphetamine in communities differ from those seen with opioids. Methamphetamine use and trafficking are closely linked to increased rates of property crime, violence, mental illness, poverty, and child neglect. The availability of high-purity meth has made addiction more severe and long-lasting, producing challenges on local health and social services.

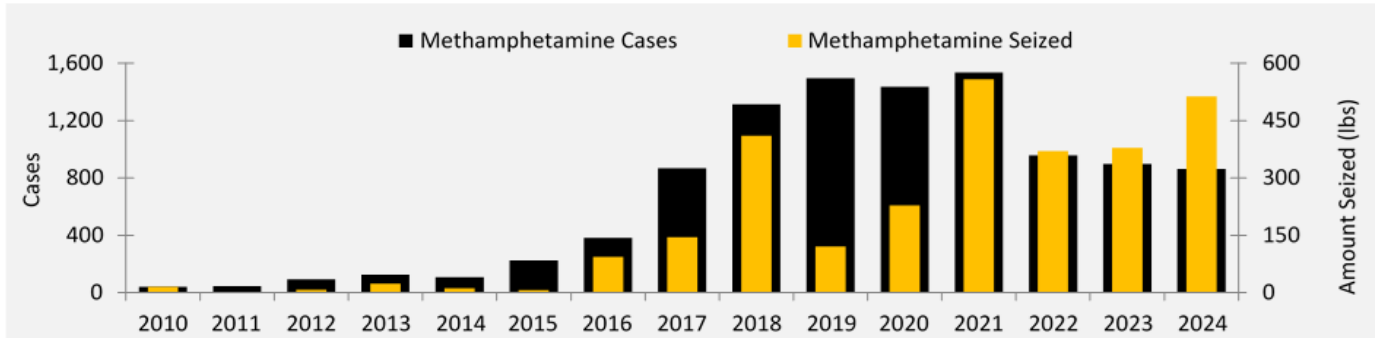


# Ohio State Highway Patrol

## Statistical Analysis Unit



### OSHP Methamphetamine Overview



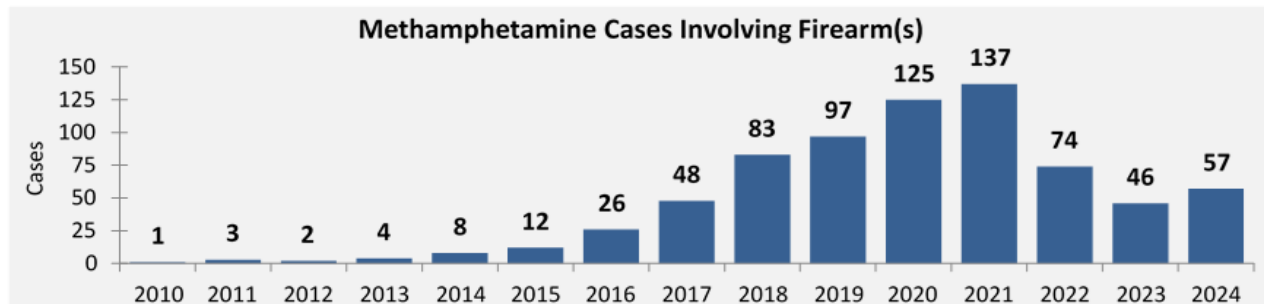
Source: OSHP Case Management System.

Year	Cases	Amount lbs
2010	42	15
2011	45	0.2
2012	92	7.8
2013	124	24
2014	107	12
2015	225	7.1

Year	Cases	Amount lbs
2016	382	94
2017	867	145
2018	1,315	410
2019	1,495	120
2020	1,437	229
2021	1,537	558

Year	Cases	Amount lbs
2022	958	370
2023	898	378
2024	863	513
Total	10,387	2,884
Average	692	192

- Over the past 15 years (2010-2024), the Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP) initiated 10,387 cases involving methamphetamine. During this time, 2,884 pounds of methamphetamine was seized, an average of 192 pounds per year. While the number of cases involving methamphetamine increased from 2010 to 2015, the total amount seized stayed relatively low, remaining under 25 pounds per year during that time. Beginning in 2016, OSHP began to experience a sharp increase in both cases and amount of methamphetamine seized, peaking in 2021 at 558 pounds across 1,537 cases. While cases and seizure amounts have dropped since that time, they remain relatively high. In 2024, OSHP initiated 863 cases involving 513 pounds of methamphetamine, an increase of nearly 2,000% in cases and an over 3,000% increase in amount seized in the last 15 years (from 2010 to 2012).
- Over the past 15 years (2010-2024), 723 of the total 10,387 methamphetamine cases also involved one or more seized firearms (7%). In 2010, only one of the 42 methamphetamine cases also involved at least one firearm (2.4%). Last year, 57 of the total 863 methamphetamine cases involved one or more firearms (6.6%). Similar to the increases in amount of methamphetamine seized, the number of these cases that also involved a firearm remained under 15 from 2010-2015, before increasing to 26 in 2016 and steadily climbing to a peak of 137 in 2021. The number of methamphetamine cases that also involve one or more firearms remain high, putting officers at an additional risk during these traffic stops.



# Ohio State Highway Patrol

## Statistical Analysis Unit

- April 2024 – a Trooper stopped a vehicle on IR-70 in Madison County for a speed violation. An OSHP canine alerted to the vehicle, and a probable cause search revealed 295.6 pounds of methamphetamine in cardboard boxes in the trailer. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest methamphetamine seizure in OSHP History.
- April 2021 – a Trooper stopped a vehicle on SR-8 in Summit County for marked lanes violations. Criminal indicators were observed, and a probable cause search revealed 300 pounds of meth concealed inside boards in the truck bed. This is the largest methamphetamine seizure in the Patrol's history.

### TOP 5 DRUGS - #1 METHAMPHETAMINE

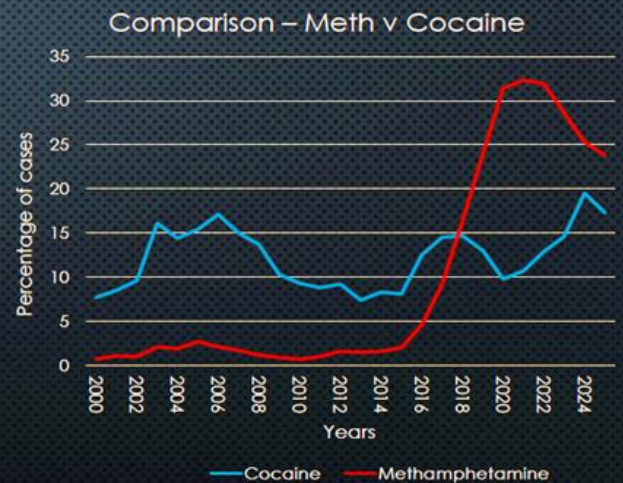
- ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEGUN TO TREND DOWN, METHAMPHETAMINE IS THE MOST COMMONLY REPORTED COMPOUND AT THE OSHP CRIME LABORATORY
- MOST OTHER LABORATORIES TYPICALLY ARE REPORTING METHAMPHETAMINE AS THEIR THIRD MOST REPORTED COMPOUND, FOLLOWING COCAINE AND FENTANYL
- THE VAST MAJORITY OF METHAMPHETAMINE SUBMISSIONS TO THE LABORATORY CONSIST OF CRYSTALLINE MATERIAL, FOLLOWED BY TABLET FORMS





# METHAMPHETAMINE – FROM MIDWEST TO MEXICO

- METHAMPHETAMINE ABUSE IN OHIO BEGAN TO INCREASE IN THE EARLY 2000s, WHEN ANHYDROUS AMMONIA (ONE-POT) PREPARATIONS USING EPHEDRINE/PSEUDOEPHEDRINE AS A STARTING INGREDIENT BEGAN TO PROLIFERATE
- IN 2004, PRODUCTION OF METHAMPHETAMINE INCREASED IN MEXICO. THE MAJORITY OF THIS SUPPLY REMAINED IN THE WESTERN US UNTIL 2015
- PRIOR TO 2016, METHAMPHETAMINE NEVER MADE UP MORE THAN 2% OF REPORTS AT THE OSHP CRIME LABORATORY
- FROM 2016, IT RAPIDLY BEGAN TO RISE FROM 4.6% OF REPORTS (#7 REPORTED COMPOUND) TO 9.2% OF REPORTS IN 2017 (#4 REPORTED COMPOUND) TO 23.9% OF REPORTS IN 2019 (#1 REPORTED COMPOUND) AND HAS BEEN THE MOST REPORTED COMPOUND AT THE OSHP CRIME LABORATORY FROM THAT POINT FORWARD, PEAKING IN 2021 WHERE IT MADE UP 32.3% OF REPORTS
- IN THE 1<sup>ST</sup> QUARTER OF 2025, METHAMPHETAMINE REMAINS THE MOST COMMONLY REPORTED COMPOUND AT THE OSHP CRIME LABORATORY, AT 23.8% OF REPORTS WHICH IS SLIGHTLY DOWN FROM 25.2% OF REPORTS IN THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2024



## Resources

- Wiley, 2021 - Monitoring methamphetamine in the United States: A two-decade review as seen by the DEA methamphetamine profiling program. Steven G. Toske and Tim D. McKibben
- United States Sentencing Commission, June 2024 – Methamphetamine Trafficking Offenses in the Federal Criminal Justice System