METHAMPHETAMINE GUIDE FOR LANDLORDS

Methamphetamine ('meth') contamination continues to be an issue for some New Zealand landlords, and can create uncertainty when it comes to tenant health, property values, clean-up requirements, and potential insurance or Tenancy Tribunal disputes. For several years, there have been two widely referenced guidelines in use, the NZS 8510:2017 standard and the 2018 Gluckman Report, which has made it difficult for landlords to understand which level to rely on.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has now confirmed which thresholds will form the basis of the new meth regulations. From 16 April 2026, there are clear guidelines to confirm what is considered to be contaminated, and at which level a property becomes uninhabitable.

This guide explains the thresholds, how they are interpreted, and what steps may be required if contamination is found. It's designed to help landlords remain compliant, protect their tenants, and avoid disputes.

GENERAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Landlords must provide homes that are safe, clean, and fit to live in, and this includes ensuring that properties are not contaminated with methamphetamine at levels that could create a risk for someone living there. These obligations apply equally to private landlords and to property managers acting on behalf of owners.

While landlords are not required to carry out routine meth testing, renting a home with contamination above acceptable levels could breach the duty to provide a safe and habitable property. If contamination is confirmed, landlords must take appropriate steps to address it. The Residential Tenancies Act also gives landlords the right to test a property for meth during a tenancy, provided they follow the required notice periods.

Tenants are prohibited from using, possessing, or manufacturing meth in a rental property, as it breaches tenancy obligations and is also a criminal offence under the Misuse of Drugs Act. If there is evidence that meth has been used or produced by a tenant, the Tribunal can require the tenant to pay the cost of decontamination, and they may face additional penalties.

UNDERSTANDING THE THRESHOLDS

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CONTAMINATION LEVEL	MEANING	ACTION
Below 15 µg /100cm^2	Interpreted as low-level residue	Evidence suggests levels below 15 µg/100cm^2 are unlikely to require remediation in most situations.
15 - 30µg /100cm^2	Contaminated	Cleaning is required, although the premises are generally not considered uninhabitable at this level.
Above 30µg /100cm^2	Uninhabitable	The premises are considered uninhabitable at this level and full remediation is required before anyone can live there.
Suspected clandestine lab	High-risk situation	Authorities must be notified and a full assessment and remediation arranged.

Note: NZS 8510:2017 is not included in this table, as MHUD no longer considers this a risk to health. Some insurers may continue to reference NZS 8510 in their policy wording, so landlords should check their own policy for its requirements.

METHAMPHETAMINE TESTING

Meth testing is not legally mandatory, however it can be a helpful risk management tool, particularly where insurers require it or where a landlord needs a clear "before and after" record for liability purposes. A moderate and considered approach is recommended, as testing a property for the first time may reveal older contamination that cannot be attributed to a current or recent tenant.

- Before deciding whether to test, landlords should consider:
- What their insurance policy requires
- Whether a baseline test exists from the start of the tenancy
- Their risk tolerance and financial capacity if contamination is found
- Whether they should seek advice before proceeding

Composite testing is usually carried out first, using combined samples to identify whether contamination exists. If a composite test returns a positive result, detailed testing is then used to identify specific areas and levels. Detailed testing is more expensive but is essential for determining what cleaning or remediation is necessary.

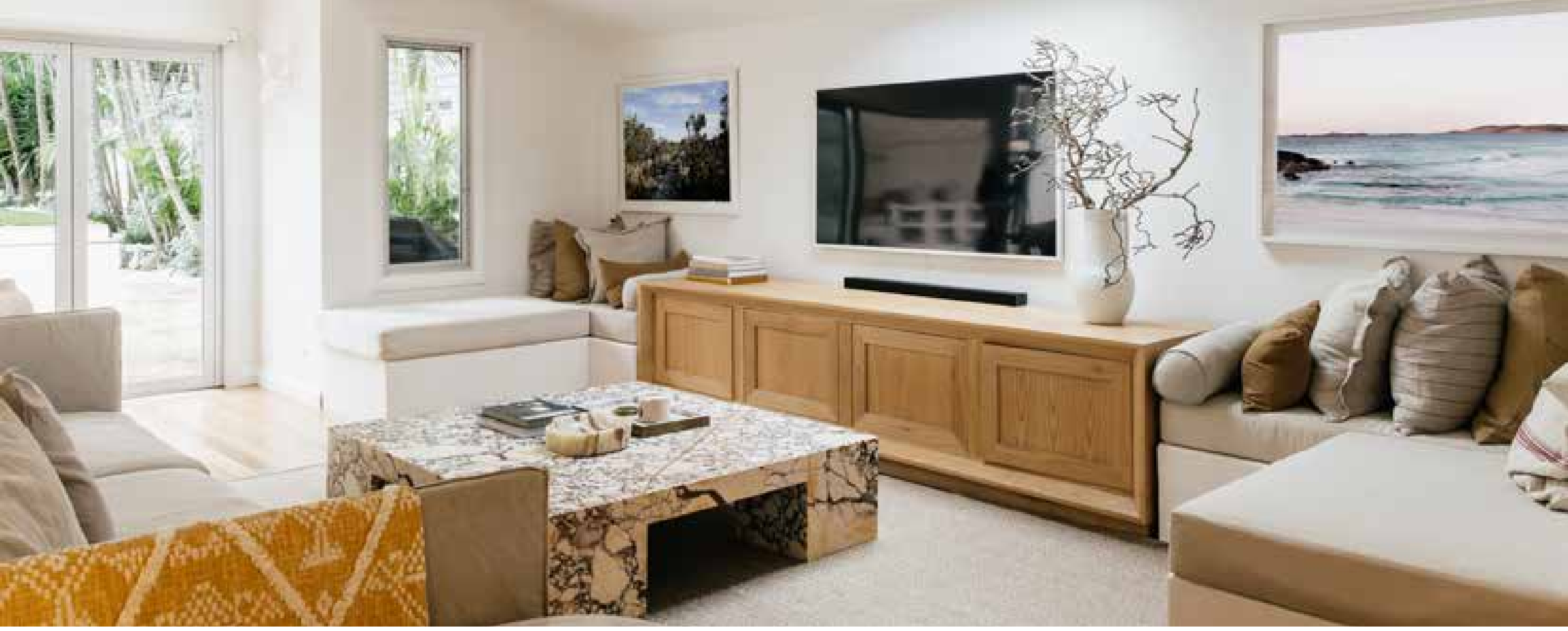
Landlords should use qualified meth testing companies, as DIY kits may not hold weight in the Tribunal. Clear records of all testing should be kept, and when testing occurs during a tenancy, results must be shared with tenants within the required timeframes. It is also advisable to use the same company for baseline and exit testing, as different sampling methods can make comparisons more difficult.

INTERPRETING TEST RESULTS

When methamphetamine residue levels are above 15µg/100cm2 (micrograms per hundred square centimetres), the property is considered contaminated and needs to be decontaminated.

The property must be decontaminated until methamphetamine residue levels are no longer above 15µg/100cm2 (until they are 15µg/100cm2 or less).
Contamination will be determined on a room-by-room basis. For example, if the bedroom is above 15µg/100cm2 but the kitchen is below 15µg/100cm2, only the bedroom needs to be decontaminated.

If methamphetamine residue levels are above 30µg/100cm2, landlords and tenants will have the option of ending the tenancy. Tenants can give 2 days' notice and landlords can give 7 days' notice when terminating a tenancy.



WHEN CONTAMINATION IS CONFIRMED

If meth contamination is confirmed, we recommend taking a calm and methodical approach to ensure the correct steps are followed. As a general guide:

1. Review the results closely and determine whether the contamination is localised or widespread.
2. Discuss the findings with your testing company and ask what they recommend.
   a. They may advise further detailed testing.
   b. They may recommend immediate decontamination if levels are high.
3. Notify your insurer and ask what evidence they require and what steps they expect you to take.
4. Consider the tenancy situation:
   a. If levels fall between 15 and 30 μg/100cm², cleaning may be possible while the tenant remains in place.
   b. If levels are above 30 μg/100cm², the property is uninhabitable and a notice to terminate under Section 59B of the Residential Tenancies Act must be issued.
5. Engage qualified professionals for decontamination or cleaning.
6. A qualified professional must carry out detailed testing of the property again to confirm levels are no longer above 15μg/100cm2.
7. Keep all reports and evidence for your insurer and for any Tribunal proceedings.
8. Seek to recover costs through your insurer, including loss of rent cover where applicable.
9. If appropriate, take steps to recover the insurance excess from the tenant and seek exemplary damages for unlawful use.

BEST PRACTICE: MINIMISING RISK AND PROTECTING YOUR INVESTMENT

Protecting your property from meth contamination starts with prevention and clear processes. Careful tenant screening, clear expectations, regular checks, and documented records are your strongest tools to minimise risk and support any insurance or Tribunal outcome if contamination does occur. As a general guide, we recommend the following best practice steps:

- **Screen tenants carefully:** Check references and tenancy history, and set clear expectations at sign-up that illegal activity will not be tolerated.
- **Include a meth clause in tenancy agreements:** Confirm that the property may be tested if required, and that tenants may be liable for contamination above acceptable thresholds.
- **Inspect and document regularly:** Carry out routine inspections, record notes and photos, and stay alert to warning signs.
- **Test between tenancies when appropriate:** Baseline and exit testing can provide a clear record of the property's condition and may be required by your insurer, so consider your policy requirements and risk tolerance before deciding.
- **Act promptly if contamination is found:** Proportion your response to the contamination level and follow professional advice on remediation.
- **Engage reputable professionals:** Use certified testers and cleaners, and keep all reports and certificates.
- **Stay insured and keep records:** Ensure your policy covers meth contamination, and maintain inspection logs, test results, and communication records.
- **Compare insurance policies:** Cover can vary between insurers, particularly around the thresholds that trigger a claim, so ensure your policy provides appropriate protection.
- **Record new items and chattels:** If no pre-tenancy test is done, keep a clear record of any new surfaces or chattels added during the tenancy, as these can be tested later if contamination is suspected.
- **Work with your property manager and insurer:** Follow the correct processes and seek advice when needed to safeguard both your tenants and your investment.

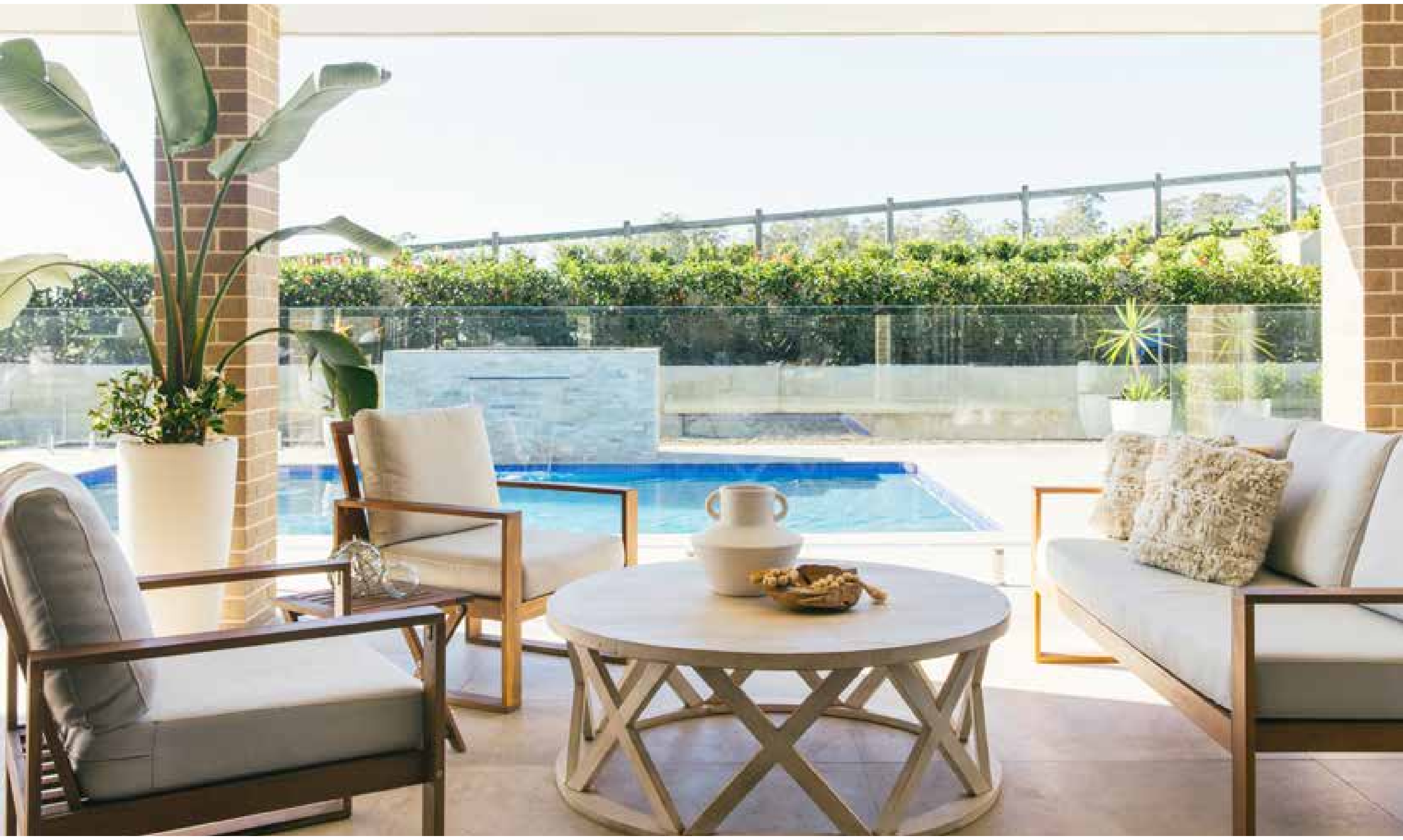
By taking these steps you reduce the likelihood of contamination going undetected, protect the health of your tenants, and place yourself in a strong position to defend a claim or recover costs if an issue arises.

HOW CAN WE HELP?

Ray White property managers have access to robust methamphetamine risk management processes that help them recognise and respond to potential contamination issues. Each office has approved tenancy agreement clauses and acknowledgements, ensuring that tenants are aware that testing may occur.

If meth contamination is suspected, our property managers can draw on specialist tenancy law support to help guide you through the appropriate steps. We encourage a best-practice, low-risk approach, and we are here to support you if an issue ever arises.

For tailored advice, speak with your Ray White property manager or visit www.hud.govt.nz and tenancy.govt.nz for more information.



Disclaimer

This guide is provided for general information only and does not constitute legal, insurance, or professional advice. Every property and situation is different, and landlords remain responsible for complying with the Residential Tenancies Act, their insurance policy requirements, and any other relevant laws or regulations. We recommend seeking independent legal or professional advice before making decisions regarding methamphetamine testing or remediation.

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