

Meth Front Line: Officers Endangered

Written by Steve Frank
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It is an ever-changing scenario—the chemical mix being concocted to make methamphetamine. And it is proving to be a danger to everyone, but especially to law enforcement officers who arrive first, going into manufacturing and dump sites. Wednesday evening, a Watauga deputy had to be treated for exposure to chemicals as a citizen reported a suspicious vehicle and he was investigating. Sgt. Phillips was taken to the emergency room and treated for exposure to and breathing in toxic chemicals that appear to be connected to the manufacture of meth, that while breathing apparatus was brought in from a fire department for other investigators to safely deal with the chemicals. Those chemicals are still being analyzed, according to Sheriff Len Hagaman, and the SBI is looking at those chemicals as a potentially new and unknown method to ‘cook’ meth. Not only are the chemicals a threat to everyone exposed, but the cost of clean-up is an issue, an issue that made Hagaman ‘extremely proud’ of the Watauga Commissioners and county staff, as they have stepped up to fund cleaning up such sites found in the county. With this new threat, Hagaman said he is working with surrounding law enforcement—Chief Crawford in Boone and the sheriffs of counties surrounding us—to share information while working to obtain funding for clean-up of discovered chemicals, being found in structures and vehicles as well as being dumped along the roads. Our state representatives have become involved in the issue, and we’ll stay on top of developments in this dangerous matter.