

Methamphetamine regulations

The **Residential Tenancies (Managing Methamphetamine Contamination) Regulations 2026** come into force on 16 April 2026. These rules provide long-awaited clarity for landlords about how to deal with methamphetamine in rental properties. In particular, they set levels for contamination and when a tenancy can be terminated, and introduce new testing and decontamination rules.

What do the regulations cover?

NEW LEVELS FOR CONTAMINATION AND DETERMINING UNINHABITABILITY

The regulations establish two clear legal thresholds when methamphetamine residue is found at a rental property:

- Contamination threshold (15 µg/100 cm²):**
 A property (or any part of a property) is legally 'contaminated' if residue levels exceed 15 µg/100 cm² (micrograms per hundred square centimetres). If levels are at or below this, the property may be legally rented to tenants. This level triggers an obligation for the landlord to decontaminate the property. Renting out a property knowing that it is contaminated with levels above 15 µg/100 cm² is an unlawful act, attracting a potential award of exemplary damages of up to \$4,000, in addition to compensation and work orders requiring decontamination.
- Uninhabitable threshold (30 µg/100 cm²):**
 If residue levels exceed 30 µg/100 cm², the property is considered 'uninhabitable.' Either party can give notice to end the tenancy at this point. Landlords can give a minimum of seven days' notice, while at least two days' notice is required from a tenant.

TESTING

The regulations bring in new testing requirements.

Screening assessment

A valid screening assessment can be undertaken by anyone at any time, including tenants and landlords or a professional. This type of test is based on a number of samples taken through the property which are combined together to give an indication of whether methamphetamine is present. If the test results indicate a presence above 15 µg/100 cm² then detailed

testing is required to determine the individual results for each area sampled. Only testing methods approved under the New Zealand Standard for Methamphetamine Testing and Decontamination (NZS 8510:2017) may be used. These include individual sampling, laboratory composite testing and validated screening test kits. Field composite tests and unvalidated test kits are not allowed.

Detailed testing

Landlords will be required to arrange for detailed testing if:

- Police or the Council tells them that there has likely been methamphetamine manufactured on the property
- a permitted screening assessment shows methamphetamine levels are above 15 µg/100 cm².

Detailed tests can only be performed by qualified professionals who are independent of any decontamination provider. A detailed test gives results for each individual area that a sample has been taken from. They are useful for the decontamination process as they highlight areas that require particular attention.

Testing between tenancies is not compulsory. However, this is recommended to:

- have peace of mind that the property does not present a health issue for incoming tenants
- have clear evidence to refute a tenant's claim that the property was contaminated at the outset
- show which tenants are responsible for any contamination discovered during or at the end of the tenancy
- meet your insurance provider's policy requirements – an ongoing test is often a condition of cover for decontamination costs.

DECONTAMINATION

A landlord may opt to decontaminate the property themselves or engage a professional. There are strict processes which need to be followed under the New Zealand Standard (NZS 8510:2017) in terms of the methods, materials and health and safety precautions required.

Room-by-room approach

Contamination is assessed on a room-by-room basis. For example, if only the garage exceeds $15\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$ but the rest of the house is clear, only the garage must be decontaminated.

A detailed test by a professional is required after decontamination to confirm the cleaning has reduced the levels to below $15\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$.

If test results reveal levels above $15\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$ but less than $30\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$ then the landlord and tenant may reach a mutual agreement to end the tenancy if decontamination cannot occur with the tenants in occupation.

ABANDONED GOODS

The regulations amend the existing abandoned goods procedure in the Residential Tenancies Act 1986 to deal with goods which may be contaminated. A landlord can factor in the costs of testing and specialised storage for these goods.

Frequently asked questions

DO I NEED TO SHARE TEST RESULTS WITH EXISTING TENANTS?

If you test a property during a tenancy and receive results, you must notify all current tenants of the results within seven days of receiving them. Failure to do so can result in exemplary damages of up to \$1,500. This applies regardless of the levels revealed in the test results.

WHAT DO I NEED TO TELL PROSPECTIVE TENANTS IF THERE HAS BEEN SOME METHAMPHETAMINE PRESENCE DETECTED AT THE PROPERTY?

You must not knowingly rent out a property that is contaminated (above $15\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$). This could result in an award of exemplary damages of up to \$4,000 and compensation to tenants at the Tenancy Tribunal.

If a tenant specifically asks about methamphetamine contamination at a property, the relevant information should be disclosed to reduce the risk of a misrepresentation claim. The tenancy could potentially be set aside by the Tribunal if the misrepresentation induced them to enter the agreement.

While decontamination is not required if levels are below $15\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$, disclosure of results below that level may be warranted in some circumstances. For example, if the property had previously been used as a meth lab.

We recommend that you discuss your property's methamphetamine history and results with your property manager to determine the best approach.

HOW WILL MY INSURANCE BE AFFECTED?

We recommend you check your insurance policy regarding any cover for methamphetamine testing and decontamination or loss of rent. In particular, you should check with your insurer regarding:

- the level of methamphetamine which will apply under your policy for making a claim
- whether they do provide cover for decontamination and testing costs if levels of methamphetamine below $15\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$ are detected
- if any loss of rent cover is affected by the new level of $30\mu\text{g}/100\text{cm}^2$ at which a property is deemed uninhabitable
- if a baseline test is a condition of cover
- what information you need to disclose to your insurer about your property's methamphetamine history.

Some companies also provide specialised landlord insurance which may provide additional cover for methamphetamine testing and decontamination costs if this is not provided under your general insurance policy.