

Methamphetamine contamination remains a real and costly risk for rental properties in New Zealand. Testing between tenancies is one of the most effective ways landlords can protect their investment, meet legal obligations, and ensure a safe home for incoming tenants.

1. Establishes a Clear Baseline of Responsibility

Between tenancy testing creates a documented record of the property's condition before a new tenant moves in. This "baseline" is critical if contamination is later discovered. Without it, it can be difficult or impossible to prove when contamination occurred or who is responsible, often leaving the landlord liable for the full cost of remediation.

2. Protects Against Significant Financial Loss

Meth decontamination is expensive. Cleanup costs commonly range from \$10,000 to \$50,000, often combined with weeks or months of lost rent. In comparison, a standard meth test costs only a few hundred dollars.

3. Supports Insurance Cover

Most landlord insurance policies require proof that contamination occurred during a tenancy. A professional baseline test completed between tenancies is often essential evidence for insurance claims. Without this documentation, insurers may decline cover entirely, leaving landlords to pay remediation costs out of pocket.

4. Helps Meet Legal and Health Obligations

Landlords must provide rental properties that are clean, habitable, and free from health risks under legislation such as the *Residential Tenancies Act 1986*, *Building Act 2004*, and *Health Act 1956*. Meth residue can pose long term health risks, particularly to children. Testing demonstrates that the landlord has taken reasonable steps to ensure the property is safe to occupy.

5. Reduces Liability and Disputes

If contamination is discovered after a tenancy ends and no prior testing exists, disputes over liability are common. Between tenancy testing provides clear evidence that supports claims at the Tenancy Tribunal and reduces the risk of landlords being held responsible for damage caused by tenants or their guests.

6. Acts as a Powerful Deterrent

Tenants are far less likely to use or manufacture meth in a property if they know regular testing is part of the management process. This clear boundary helps discourage high risk behaviour before it starts and can reduce the likelihood of problematic tenancies altogether.

7. Protects Property Value

Undetected meth contamination can significantly reduce a property's value, especially if discovered during a sale or refinance. Regular testing helps preserve the condition of the property and provides reassurance to future buyers and tenants.

Best Practice

While testing before every tenancy is not legally mandatory, it is widely considered best practice and may be required by your insurer. Conducting a meth test as soon as a tenancy ends and before a new one begins is one of the simplest and most effective ways to manage risk.

A Small Cost Compared to a Massive Liability

Between tenancy meth testing is a low cost, preventative measure that offers legal protection, insurance support, financial security, and peace of mind. When weighed against the potential cost of remediation, lost rent, and disputes, testing is a prudent step for responsible rental property owners.

Best Practice Recommendation

At a minimum, meth testing should be completed between tenancies.

Testing after a tenant vacates and before new occupants move in is widely regarded as best practice because it:

- establishes a clear baseline condition of the property
- protects insurance coverage
- clearly assigns responsibility if contamination is later discovered

While routine meth testing is not mandatory, testing between tenancies is the most effective and widely accepted way to:

- reduce disputes
- protect insurance cover
- limit financial exposure
- demonstrate reasonable care

For many landlords, this single test per tenancy cycle provides the right balance between cost, protection, and peace of mind.