

# Suspected meth lab busted, man arrested

A Mansfield man was arrested Friday morning on multiple drug charges, including manufacturing and selling methamphetamine, officials said.

Dale Smith, 24, of 156 W. Second St., was charged with one count of illegal manufacture of drugs, one count of illegal assembly or possession of chemicals for manufacture of drugs, one count of possession of controlled substances and two counts of aggravated trafficking in drugs, METRICH Commander Lt. Keith Porch said in a news release.



Dale Smith of Mansfield was arrested on multiple drug charges Friday. He is accused of manufacturing and trafficking Methamphetamine.

Police alleged Smith was conducting the operation out of his second-floor apartment.

“The METRICH Enforcement Unit, along with the Galion Police Department and the Crawford County Sheriff’s Office, began the investigation after receiving information that the suspect, Dale C. Smith, was manufacturing and then selling methamphetamine in both Mansfield and Galion,” the release said. “The search warrant is the culmination of the investigation that lasted several weeks.”

Two other people were found in the apartment during the arrest, but they have not yet been charged, Sgt. Joe Petrycki said. They were not believed to be living in the apartment, he said.

Landlord Wally Toward said he was shocked to hear of suspected drug activity in one of his complexes, let alone in Smith’s apartment. Smith had been renting the apartment with a woman for about a year, and had never caused problems before, Toward said.

Both hold respectable jobs in the community, he said.

“When we rent to someone we do background screens for drugs and arrests, and they had nothing,” Toward said. “We watch that stuff like a hawk.”

Just five days ago, Toward said, he did a service call at the apartment for a plugged drain, but never saw or smelled anything suspicious.

But when METRICH detectives raided the apartment Friday, they reported finding numerous partially empty plastic bottles and other ingredients consistent with the illegal manufacturing of methamphetamine, the release said. Police also reported a strong odor of ammonia inside the apartment, the release said.

Several other occupied apartments in the building were evacuated as a precaution while the apartment was cleaned. The chemical fumes produced from a meth lab can be noxious and harmful to anyone exposed to them, Porch said.

No children live in the 30-unit complex, Toward said.

METRICH Enforcement Unit Detective Perry Wheeler and Richland County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Jim Nicholson, both methamphetamine specialists and members of the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification Clandestine Drug Lab Unit, processed the scene and neutralized the chemicals and ingredients.

Toward said he has been a landlord in the area for 40 years, but this is the first time a tenant has ever been suspected of serious drug crimes. Early in his career, a man in one of his complexes was caught selling drugs muled in from out-of-state, but things have been quite since, he said.

“I really want to thank METRICH for acting so fast,” Toward said. “They handled it well, with minimal damage, and they protected the other tenants.”

All of the people who were staying in the apartment are being evicted, he said.

Originally published in the News Journal on February 1, 2014.