

Meth contamination forces renters to flee Posted 9:33 pm, May 12, 2015, by [Rob Low](#),
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E, Colo. -- A Lafayette family has been forced out of their rental unit with little more than the clothes on their back after the Boulder County Health Department determined the apartment was contaminated with methamphetamine residue. Lenny and Jessica Hill are upset with their former landlord for allowing them to move in. "Should've never rented me the unit right from the get go," said Lenny Hill.

He feels that way because on December 10, 2014, six weeks before the Hill family moved in, Lafayette police arrested a man inside the apartment for meth possession and paraphernalia.

The Hill family lived in their unit from late January to mid-March, when they were given about an hour's notice to leave, forcing Lenny to leave his work tools behind. "All my operation is in there. I can't work unless I spend another \$1,000 replacing everything," said Hill.

Health inspectors found the apartment so contaminated that it seeped through the walls next door where neighbor Bernadette Chavez lives.

"I couldn't figure out why my hair was falling out, what was going on," said Chavez. It was actually Chavez's unit that was tested first.

Her landlord is the Boulder County Housing Authority. The agency decided to test her apartment for meth residue based on Chavez's symptoms and sure enough, it test well above the state standards of .5 micrograms for meth.

It was then that the Boulder County Health Department had Lenny Hill's unit tested and discovered meth levels that were ten times higher than the levels in Chavez's apartment.

"I think Tim should be liable for all of us poor people that have lost everything. Our lives, our health, I don't know if five years down the road my doctor is going to say you could still have problems Bernadette," said Chavez.

The "Tim" Bernadette Chavez refers to is Tim McWilliams, the landlord who rented unit 771 to the Hill family six weeks before they were relocated to a hotel because of meth residue.

Numerous neighbors tell FOX31 they complained to Tim McWilliams about his former tenant and her possible drug use.

One neighbor, who didn't want to be identified said McWilliams "said that he would look into it." FOX31 spoke to another neighbor who admitted being a former meth customer at the apartment and told us meth cooking was taking place inside the unit.

When asked if he thought McWilliams should've suspected drug activity was taking place inside his rental, he replied, "Oh yeah definitely ... he'd have to be completely oblivious beyond belief (not to know), any 3-year-old would know."

Even neighbor Bernadette Chavez said she complained to McWilliams about suspected drug activity next door. "He said he was going to talk to the tenant, do some investigating on his own and go from there. I never heard from him again," said Chavez.

Under Colorado law, the landlord has cleanup liability "When an illegal drug laboratory is otherwise discovered and the property owner has received notice."

Lafayette Police say unconfirmed rumors from neighbors is not official notice and investigators admit they never told McWilliams about the December 10 drug arrest at his unit, so they can't prove he had prior knowledge before he rented the apartment to the Hill family.

McWilliams declined to speak with FOX31 on camera but by email said neighbors only complained to him about loud noise, "Nothing about drug use, and certainly not meth." In his email to us, McWilliams

added, "There was no indication of a need to test for meth until we received the information from the County."

McWilliams is now cleaning up unit 771, which the Boulder County Housing Authority estimates could cost \$30,000-40,000 and take 4 to 6 weeks to complete.

Homes can be toxic from someone smoking meth just a few times.

The drug residue can cause respiratory problems and other health issues. Meth doesn't leave a lingering smell so it's almost impossible to know if the place you're moving into might be contaminated, unless you've been warned by the neighbors.

Both Bernadette Chavez and the Hill family are living in a hotel during the cleanup process. Chavez hopes to move back in May 10. Lenny Hill says he won't rent from McWilliams again but he's still struggling to find a new place to rent.