

Springfield crystal meth lab dismantled following narcotics investigation

A narcotics investigation has resulted in a Springfield man being arrested and charged with maintaining a crystal methamphetamine production facility in his apartment, acting Union County Prosecutor Grace H. Park and Springfield Police Chief John Cook jointly announced Tuesday.

John Howlett, 42, is charged with first-degree maintaining a narcotics production facility, first-degree possession of methamphetamine with the intent to distribute, two second-degree weapons offenses, and a third-degree drug offense.

A joint investigation by the Springfield Police Department and the Prosecutor's Office's Guns, Gangs, Drugs, and Violent Crimes Task Force resulted in the execution of a search warrant at Howlett's home on Troy Drive in Springfield Monday afternoon. Along with what appeared to be a makeshift methamphetamine laboratory, arriving detectives encountered a toxic odor in the apartment, prompting the evacuation of several nearby housing units and the dispatching of the Springfield Fire Department and the Union County Hazardous Material Response Team.

An evaluation of the apartment then was conducted by the New Jersey State Police Hazardous Materials Response Unit and the Drug Enforcement Administration's Clandestine Laboratory Enforcement Team, which jointly determined that it was safe for a search of the apartment to proceed. Recovered from the apartment and an adjacent garage were approximately 11 ounces of crystal methamphetamine, more than 160 oxycodone pills, approximately 220 various prescription pills, 20 folds of heroin, and numerous pieces of narcotics production equipment,

including instructions on the production of methamphetamine, packaging materials, several boxes of pseudoephedrine tablets, iodine, batteries, heating sources, glassware, digital scales, Tyvek protective suits, a money counter, and a filtration system wired directly to an electrical box. Also found in the home were approximately \$13,000 in cash, a sophisticated video surveillance and computer system, a Sig Sauer airsoft gun, and a BB gun.

Howlett was arrested in his vehicle outside the apartment while 24-year-old Elana Garman was arrested inside; she later was turned over to the custody of the Bergen County Sheriff's Office after being found to have outstanding warrants out of Bergen County. Howlett was lodged in Union County Jail, with bail set at \$600,000 by state Superior Court Judge William Daniel.

Convictions for first-degree crimes commonly carry penalties of 10 to 20 years in state prison.

These criminal charges are mere accusations. Each defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in a court of law.