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Metro

Peabody hotel room may have been drug lab

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE CORRESPONDENT JULY 30, 2012

 ARTICLE

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Police evacuated a Holiday Inn on Route 1 in Peabody late Sunday night after discovering what appeared to be a drug lab for making crystal methamphetamine.

Peabody police would not say if a drug lab was the cause of the evacuation, but acknowledged they had discovered a large amount of “dangerous” chemicals in one of the rooms after a hotel security guard noticed smoke coming from the room, Capt. Dennis Bomaiuto said outside the Holiday Inn early Monday morning.

But a supervisor for an ambulance service responding to the scene, Wade Messamore, said he was told by authorities that the hotel room had been converted into a meth lab. Moreover agents from the US Drug Enforcement Agency and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms were at the hotel assisting local and state police with their investigation, Bomaiuto added.

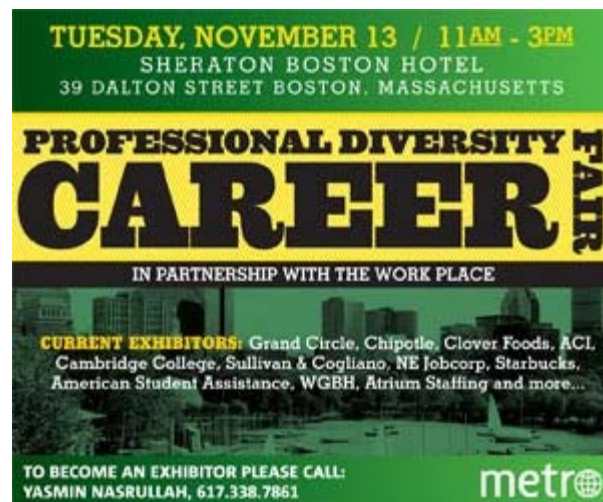
There was no one in the room at the time of the discovery, Bomaiuto said, but he added that the person who had rented the room was “known” to Peabody police.

Fire and police officials evacuated 190 people from the hotel, including 25 children, as a precaution, and they were later allowed to return to their rooms. No one was treated at the scene for chemical-related injuries.

Crystal meth, as it is known, is a highly addictive drug that has become extremely popular among users in recent years, and widely feared by authorities for its ruinous effect on addicts.

It is cheap and easy to make with over the counter pharmaceuticals and law enforcement officials say it is increasingly produced in “tabletop labs” that can be thrown together in many locations, including hotel rooms. In December, 2007 agents arrested a Waltham man outside a motor lodge in Natick where he and a colleague had allegedly rented a room to make crystal meth.

Making crystal meth involves using highly volatile chemicals, including acetone, denatured alcohol and sulfuric acid, and the vapors from the chemicals can permeate the walls and carpeting of the makeshift labs, rendering them uninhabitable, according to the US Justice Department.



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