

Austin woman allegedly part of meth lab operation located by ISP near Deputy

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An Austin woman was arrested by Indiana State Police on preliminary criminal charges that included manufacturing methamphetamine (meth) on Friday, April 10, in western Jefferson County.

Melody D. Stidham, 30, and Matthew A. Riley, 24, were taken into custody by ISP officers from the Versailles post at a home owned by Riley.

ISP Trooper Nate Adams had received information from both an anonymous source and the Jefferson County Sheriff's Department that Riley was allegedly operating a large meth lab at his residence on County Road 1350W near Deputy.

Members of the Indiana State Police Drug Enforcement Section had previously received similar information, a news release from the Versailles post noted.

That Friday, ISP officers assisted by Jefferson County deputies drove to the residence. When they knocked on the door, Riley opened it, and officers said they smelled a very strong chemical or "solvent" odor coming from inside the home.

They conducted a protective sweep of the residence, locating Stidham in an undisclosed area. They also noted several items commonly associated with the manufacture of the illegal substance. Officers secured the residence and obtained a search warrant.

Since it was suspected that a meth lab was in operation, the Indiana State Police Clandestine Lab Team responded. Armed with the warrant, officers conducted a thorough search, which revealed what was described as "...a large, sophisticated methamphetamine lab in operation." It was also reported that a stolen vehicle was found on the property.

The couple was taken into custody and transported to the Jefferson County Jail in Madison. The lab was dismantled by the Lab Team.

Preliminary charges against the couple include Class B felonies of manufacturing meth, possession of meth, possession of precursors and maintaining a common nuisance, all Class D felonies.

Additional charges may be filed against Stidham and Riley pending the outcome of the vehicle that was recovered

During court proceedings before Judge Ted Todd on Monday morning, April 13, Judge Todd allowed 72-hour holds to be placed against the couple. Both suspects may be scheduled for initial hearings today (Wednesday) and will then learn the charges that have been filed against them by the Jefferson County Prosecutor's Office.

The Indiana State Police were assisted in the investigation by the Sheriff's Office and Madison Police Department.