



January 13, 2012

## **ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN, LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT CONFISCATE THOUSANDS OF ILLEGAL SYNTHETIC DRUGS IN RETAIL "STORE SWEEPS"**

### ***Madigan Hosts a Series of Teleconferences as Part of Coordinated Synthetic Drug Response***

**Chicago** — As part of her efforts to coordinate a statewide response to the alarming spread of synthetic drugs in Illinois, Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced the results of three undercover operations that confiscated almost 2,000 packages of synthetic marijuana with a street value of nearly \$40,000 from stores throughout Illinois. Madigan's office detailed the operations with local law enforcement officials and prosecutors today in a series of presentations on the state's work to address the rising number of young people using synthetic drugs, the chemically-laced substances akin to marijuana and cocaine that can be found for sale at convenience stores, gas stations and tobacco shops all across Illinois.

"We are only at the beginning of this battle to protect young people from these deadly products," said Attorney General Madigan, "In order to ensure a strong, effective response to these drugs, law enforcement officials and prosecutors in every county of Illinois need to be empowered with information and other resources to fight this emerging epidemic."

#### **Investigators Conduct Undercover "Store Sweeps"**

Partnering with Adams County Sheriff Brent Fischer, Bond County Sheriff Jeff Brown and Vermilion County Sheriff Patrick Hartshorn, investigators with the Attorney General's office conducted three undercover visits, or "store sweeps," in their respective counties in late December to determine if retailers were selling banned synthetic marijuana products. Test results from the Illinois State Police lab revealed the presence of Schedule 1 substances or their analogs in the products purchased, which prompted 1,956 packages with a street value of \$41,628 to be confiscated.

Dubbed "Operation Smoke Out," investigators visited the following locations:

#### **Adams County:**

- 60's Spirit: 614 Maine, Quincy, Ill. – 534 packages relinquished

#### **Bond County:**

- Leisure Lounge: 107 State St., Pocahton, Ill. – 375 packages relinquished
- Marathon: 407 W. Johnson St., Pocahton, Ill. – 53 packages relinquished

#### **Vermilion County:**

- BP Gas: 901 W. Vermilion, Danville, Ill. – 378 packages relinquished
- BP Gas: 101 N. Gilbert, Danville, Ill. – 17 packages relinquished
- Hoopston Convenient Mart: 714 Orange, Hoopston, Ill. – 108 packages relinquished
- DP Dixit Pit Stop: 445 Vermilion, Danville, Ill. – 491 packages relinquished

Synthetic drug abuse is on the rise, with Poison Control Centers across the country noting a dramatic rise in calls about synthetic marijuana and "bath salts," another type of synthetic drug that contains chemical compounds to mimic the effects of cocaine or methamphetamine. In 2010, Poison Control Centers nationwide received 2,915 calls related to synthetic marijuana use. That figure jumped to 6,890 calls in 2011. Reports of bath salts were made 303 times to Poison Control Centers in 2010. A year later, the centers received 6,072 calls about bath salts.

That dramatic increase presents unique and challenging issues for law enforcement and prosecutors. Manufacturers can alter the chemical makeup of these drugs in an effort to avoid prosecution under the Illinois Controlled Substances Act and frequently make representations on the drugs' packaging that the products do not contain any banned ingredients. In addition, while the packages of the drugs often include representations that the products are not intended for human consumption, their design, labeling and marketing suggest the products be ingested. Madigan noted that these drugs are extremely dangerous because users do not know what chemicals they are consuming. Individual products can contain a wide range of chemical formulations and potencies, some of which can be two to 500 times stronger than THC, the principal psychoactive component in cannabis.

### **Statewide Calls Address New Changes in Law, Awareness Campaign with Retailers**

Earlier today, Madigan's office hosted a series of conference calls to update law enforcement officers and prosecutors on these enforcement efforts, as well as recent changes in Illinois law intended to fight the spread of synthetic drugs. Over 200 people participated in the calls.

States, including Illinois, initially responded to the rise of synthetic drug use by passing laws that banned specific formulas of synthetic marijuana and bath salts. Drug makers attempted to sidestep these laws by replacing the banned chemicals with new formulas. A new Illinois law that went into effect on Jan.1 takes a broader approach and bans all chemicals that are structural derivatives of the previously-banned chemicals.

Madigan's office offered participants a newly developed Legal Notice designed to inform retailers about those amendments and to warn them that the sale of products containing banned substances is a felony. Madigan's office is working with local law enforcement to distribute the Legal Notice to retailers to ensure that they understand that, contrary to their packaging, these products are likely to contain banned substances.

Today's announcements are part of Madigan's ongoing efforts to address this alarming trend that is responsible for growing numbers of injuries and deaths in Illinois and across the country.

In November 2011, the Attorney General hosted the first-ever statewide emergency summit to help increase awareness of synthetic drug use among state, county and local law enforcement officers, as well as educators, health care professionals and parents.

-30-

[Return to January 2012 Press Releases](#)



[© 2020 Illinois Attorney General](#)

[Home](#) • [Privacy Policy](#) • [Contact Us](#)