



April 3, 2012

MADIGAN: SWEEP OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS IN BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL, CHAMPAIGN

Retailers Surrender \$110,000 in Illegal Synthetic Drugs

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced that retailers in Bloomington-Normal and the Champaign areas were targets today of "Operation Smoked Out," an initiative aimed at removing illegal synthetic drugs from Illinois stores. In all, more than 6,000 packages of products with a street value of approximately \$110,000 were handed over to law enforcement.

"Bloomington, Normal and Champaign have significant numbers of college students who have been enticed to purchase and use these illegal and dangerous products," said Attorney General Madigan. "Retailers in these college towns should be aware that law enforcement will soon be walking through their front door to ensure that these dangerous, illegal drugs are not for sale."

Madigan said today's operation involved officers from Bloomington Police Department, Normal Police and the McLean County Sheriff's Department participated.

- Global Tobacco - 614 N. Main - 1341 packs, \$21,476.78
- Global Tobacco - 2303 E. Washington - 1290 packs, \$17,990.10
- Smoker's Den - 606 N. Main - 626 packs - \$6,518
- Price Rite - 706 N. Clinton - 186 packs - \$4,650
- Main Street Convenience - 1919 S. Main, 61 packs - \$1,033
- Discount Smoke + Pop - 1415 N. Main - 148 packs - \$2,070.52

"Our goals are awareness and voluntary compliance with the law by store owners so that these illegal and dangerous drugs are not available to young people to purchase and use," said Assistant Bloomington Police Chief Robert Wall, whose agency requested an "Operation Smoked Out" be conducted in the Twin Cities.

"I appreciate the time and resources that Attorney General Madigan puts into this initiative in our collective effort to get these dangerous products out of circulation," Sheriff Mike Emery said.

Normal Police Chief Rick Bleichner said law enforcement agencies will keep the pressure up on retailers to ensure they aren't supplying these dangerous products to shoppers.

"We are always willing to work with the Attorney General and other local agencies to do our part to ensure that these illegal products are off the shelf," said Chief Bleichner.

Champaign Store Sweeps

Also today, Champaign Police joined Madigan's investigators for a synthetic drug sweep of several retailers in that city, including:

- Global Tobacco - 202 E. Green - 873 packs - \$13,290.27
- Smoke Shack - 208 E. Green - 1,811 packs - 43,567.90.

"With these businesses sitting in the heart of our campus community, keeping our teens and students safe is a priority for our department," said Chief Anthony Cobb of Champaign. "The Champaign Police Department thanks the Attorney General's office and associated agencies for a proactive approach to removing synthetic drugs from our city streets."

The rise of synthetic drug use can be seen in the dramatic increase in calls to poison control centers across the country about synthetic marijuana and "bath salts," which are another synthetic drug type that contain chemical compounds that 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. Additionally, 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.

Attorney General Madigan has been working to increase awareness of the dangers of synthetic drugs among state, county and local law enforcement officers, educators, health care professionals and parents since November 2011, when she hosted the first-ever statewide emergency summit. Since then, Madigan's office has conducted numerous workshops with prosecutors and law enforcement personnel statewide.

The Attorney General also has proposed legislation to target the retail sale of synthetic drugs. House Bill 5233 proposes to define a "synthetic drug product" as one that contains a controlled substance not regulated by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration. The bill also addresses the fact that these drugs are sold in packages with misleading labels claiming the products are legal. The bill further makes it illegal under the Illinois Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act to sell these drugs and significantly increases the penalty for selling synthetic or misbranded drugs.

Many 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 recent 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 legislation would complement this current measure.

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