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MADIGAN: OPERATION SMOKED OUT MAKES RETURN VISIT TO CHAMPAIGN/URBANA

Retailers Surrender \$17,500 in Illegal Synthetic Drugs

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced today that retailers in Champaign and Urbana were visited yesterday as part of "Operation Smoked Out," an initiative aimed at removing illegal synthetic drugs from Illinois stores. In all, more than 1,000 packages of products worth a street value of more than \$17,500 were relinquished to law enforcement officers.

"With a significant number of college-aged and younger students, Champaign/Urbana is potentially prime territory for synthetic drug sales," said Attorney General Madigan. "Retailers should beware that we will continue these compliance checks to spread the message that these drugs are illegal and have no place being sold in their establishments."

Investigators from Madigan's office joined the Champaign and Urbana Police departments in Tuesday's compliance check. Synthetic drugs were found at two Champaign businesses:

- Evergreen Tobacco – 309 E. Green – 1,369 packs - \$12,943.71
- Undercover – 628 S. 5th St. – 232 packs - \$4,564.90

Urbana Police Lt. Rich Surles said no synthetic drug products were located at seven businesses checked in his city Tuesday but vows that his department will keep the pressure on.

"In addition to the compliance checks, officers will be identifying local stores that might sell these items in the future and provide them with information about the legality of the sale of 'K2', 'Spice' or 'Bath Salts.' Education of the retailers about the legality of selling them is just as important as the education of the general public about the potentially deadly consequences of consuming the products," said Lt. Surles.

The Champaign County State's Attorney's Office also lent support to the latest Operation Smoked Out compliance check.

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 type of synthetic drug that contains 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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