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**MADIGAN: 'OPERATION SMOKED OUT' FINDS SYNTHETIC DRUGS
AT GALESBURG STORE**

Retailer Surrenders Illegal Synthetic Marijuana, Bath Salts

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced that a Galesburg tobacco shop relinquished more than \$9,600 of illegal synthetic drugs today as part of "Operation Smoked Out," an initiative aimed at removing the dangerous substances from Illinois retail stores. In all, 324 packages of synthetic drugs were handed over to law enforcement officers.

"Synthetic drug use has grown dramatically in recent years, particularly among teens and young adults," Madigan said. "My office is working all across the state with local law enforcement agencies to fight back against the spread of these potentially deadly drugs."

Investigators from Madigan's office joined Galesburg Police to check inventory at Main Street Tobacco and Games at 914 E. Main St. The illegal products found on site included bath salts that authorities say tested positive in a methamphetamine field test. The shop's entire inventory of drug paraphernalia was also turned over to police.

"We take a proactive approach to drug enforcement in Galesburg," said Galesburg Police Sgt. Robert Schwartz. "Our success is helped by the interagency cooperation displayed by the Attorney General's office and is much appreciated."

Knox County State's Attorney's John Pepmeyer lent his personal support by accompanying Galesburg Police and the Attorney General's office at today's compliance check.

"The mission today was to take dangerous synthetic drugs off the street and to gain the commitment from the owner to refrain from the sale of these products in the future," Pepmeyer said. "Thanks to the AG's office and Galesburg Police, more than \$9,000 in drugs and the paraphernalia used to ingest them are off the street. This message should serve as a strong deterrent."

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. Bath salt-related calls skyrocketed from 303 in 2010 to 6,072 in 2011.

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

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 slightly different 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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