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MADIGAN: ILLEGAL SYNTHETIC DRUGS TAKEN FROM DEKALB STORES

Two Retailers Relinquish Products

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan reported today that two DeKalb retailers relinquished more than \$30,200 of illegal synthetic drugs Monday as part of “Operation Smoked Out,” a statewide initiative aimed at removing the dangerous substances from Illinois retail stores. In all, 1,941 packages of synthetic drugs were handed over to law enforcement officials.

“With a significant population of college-aged teens and young adults, DeKalb is potentially prime territory for synthetic drug sales,” Madigan said. “These store visits are designed to send a very clear message to retailers that these drugs are illegal and have no place for sale in their establishments.”

Investigators from Madigan’s office joined DeKalb Police and DeKalb County Sheriff’s officers to check the inventory at several locations. Illegal products were located and relinquished at the following:

- Roxxi’s – 143 S. 2nd St. – 1,877 packages – street value: \$29,306;
- Shadowlands – 1027 W. Hillcrest Dr. – 64 packages – street value: \$960.

Madigan said three additional tobacco shops were visited Monday and all signed affidavits agreeing not to sell synthetic drug products.

“Monday’s activities were vitally important because of the clear danger these products present to our teenagers and young adults,” said DeKalb County Sheriff Roger Scott. “There is no doubt about the potentially life-threatening situation the use of these products can place a person in.”

“I hope this action sends a strong message that our community will not tolerate the sale of these harmful substances,” DeKalb Police Lt. Gary Spangler said.

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,” another form 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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