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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN: 'OPERATION SMOKED OUT' NETS ILLEGAL SYNTHETIC DRUGS IN CRYSTAL LAKE STORES

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan reported today that two Crystal Lake retailers relinquished more than \$6,000 worth of illegal synthetic drugs as part of "Operation Smoked Out," a statewide initiative aimed at eliminating the dangerous drugs from Illinois retail stores. In all, 180 packages of synthetic drugs were handed over to law enforcement officials.

"Synthetic drug use has grown rapidly in Illinois, particularly among teens and young adults," Madigan said. "These store visits are part of our ongoing effort to spread awareness about the extreme danger these drugs pose and to send a message to community retailers that we will not tolerate the sale of these illegal substances in their establishments."

Investigators from Madigan's office joined the McHenry County Sheriff's Office and Crystal Lake police to check the inventory at two locations late last week. Illegal products were located and relinquished at:

- Cigarettes & More – 7103 Manor Rd., Ste. 3 – 132 packages – street value: \$4,422;
- City Mart – 35 Berkshire Dr. – 48 packages – street value: \$1,680.

"Having just created an ordinance to enforce the prohibition of the sale of these dangerous substances, it was very beneficial to have a coordinated effort with the Attorney General's office to ensure compliance by our local businesses," said Crystal Lake Police Chief David Linder.

"Educating the business community and partnering with the Attorney General's office is key to our efforts," McHenry County Undersheriff Andrew Zinke said. "We must do everything we can to protect the citizens of McHenry County from synthetic drugs, like K2 and Spice. It is imperative to the safety and security of our families and the community."

The increase in synthetic drug use has been evidenced by the dramatic rise in calls to poison control centers across the country about synthetic marijuana and "bath salts," which are another form of synthetic drugs 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. Bath salt-related calls skyrocketed from 303 in 2010 to 6,072 in 2011.

Attorney General Madigan has been working on many fronts to increase awareness of the dangers of synthetic drugs. In Evansville, Ind., last week, Madigan joined Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller in hosting a roundtable where members of law enforcement from the border states shared their experiences in dealing with both synthetic drug use and methamphetamine. 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 and strategies to eliminate these drugs from Illinois communities. Since then, Madigan's office also has conducted numerous workshops with prosecutors and law enforcement personnel throughout Illinois.

In conjunction with "Operation Smoked Out," Madigan proposed a bill that was passed by the General Assembly to crack down on the retail sale of synthetic drugs. House Bill 5233 defines a "synthetic drug product" as one that contains a controlled substance not regulated by the U.S. Food & Drug Administration. The bill, which is awaiting Governor Quinn's signature, also addresses the fact that these drugs are sold in packages with misleading labels claiming the products are legal. The bill makes it illegal under the Illinois Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act to sell these drugs and significantly increases the penalty for selling drugs with misleading labels.

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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