



## Press Releases

July 5, 2012

### **ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN: SOUTHERN ILLINOIS RETAILERS TURN OVER RECORD NUMBER OF ILLEGAL SYNTHETIC DRUGS TO AUTHORITIES**

**Springfield** — Attorney General Lisa Madigan reported today that 1,466 packages of illegal synthetic drugs with a street value of \$40,792 were relinquished by a Mount Vernon retailer on Tuesday, making it the largest amount turned over to date in "Operation Smoked Out," a statewide initiative aimed at eliminating the dangerous drugs from Illinois retail stores.

Investigators from Madigan's office joined Jefferson County Sheriff's officers and Mount Vernon Police in the compliance operation at Blind Tiger, 825 Newby Ave.

"This operation was a significant step toward removing these dangerous drugs from southern Illinois store shelves. It should send a strong message that we will not tolerate the sale of these potentially deadly substances," Madigan said.

"We have received many calls from citizens regarding purchases of these products from retailers in our city, particularly the large number of purchases at the Blind Tiger" said Mount Vernon Police Chief Chris Mendenall. "I am glad to see it stopped after our joint operation."

Mendenall noted that the Blind Tiger was closed after numerous fire and building code violations were observed by inspectors who were called to the scene during the compliance operation.

Illegal products were also located and relinquished at Main Street Records, 313 S. 10th St.: 169 packages – street value: \$4,276. A return visit to a Mount Vernon store which had previously sold illegal synthetic drug products found the store in compliance with the law today.

"Hats off to Attorney General Madigan's staff for their assistance and to her leadership in attacking this public health issue," Jefferson County Sheriff Roger Mulch said. "Our coordinated effort was successful in closing down some real problem areas."

Also Tuesday, Williamson County law enforcement joined Madigan's investigators to check the inventory at the Book Cellar, 701 W. Belcher St., in Marion: 20 packages – street value: \$600.

Williamson County Sheriff Bennie Vick noted that one other location checked in Marion turned up no illegal synthetics products.

"We appreciate the efforts of Attorney General Madigan in combating bath salts and other synthetic drugs," said Marion Police Chief John Eibeck. "Some of our arrests are of individuals who were simply out of their mind from experimenting with these dangerous drugs."

In all, retailers in Mount Vernon and Marion relinquished 1,655 packages of synthetic drugs with a street value of more than \$45,600.

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. Last month in Evansville, Ind., Madigan joined Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller in hosting a roundtable where members of law enforcement

from the bordering 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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