

U.S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration
Chicago Field Division
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www.dea.gov



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nationwide Synthetic Drug Takedown Results in 19 Million Packets of Synthetic Drugs Recovered and \$36 Million in Cash Seized *Chicago Field Divisions Results Also Released*

Chicago – Jack Riley, Special Agent-in-Charge of the Chicago Field Division of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) announced the results of the Chicago Field Division’s participation in *Operation Log Jam*. Nationally, more than 90 individuals were arrested and more than five million packets of finished designer synthetic drugs were seized in the first-ever nationwide law enforcement action against the synthetic designer drug industry responsible for the production and sale of synthetic drugs that are often marketed as bath salts, Spice, incense, or plant food. More than \$36 million in cash was also seized.

As of today, more than 4.8 million packets of synthetic cannabinoids (ex. K2, Spice) and the products to produce nearly 13.6 million more, as well as 167,000 packets of synthetic cathinones (ex. bath salts), and the products to produce an additional 392,000 were seized.

Operation Log Jam was conducted jointly by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), with assistance from the Internal Revenue Service Criminal Investigations, U.S. Postal Inspection Service, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, FBI, Food and Drug Administration’s Office of Criminal Investigations, as well as the Illinois Attorney General’s Office and the Lake County, Illinois Sheriff’s Office and the Duluth, Minnesota Police Department along with countless state and local law enforcement members in more than 109 U.S. cities and targeted every level of the synthetic designer drug industry, including retailers, wholesalers, and manufacturers.

“We will pursue these criminals with the same commitment and determination that we pursue the traffickers of illicit street drugs like heroin and cocaine,” said Mr. Riley. “In many ways these

individuals are more sinister because they use deceit to entice young people, who often believe that these drugs are safe to use because they are sold in public establishments.”

Specifically in Illinois, the DEA worked in conjunction with the Lake County Sheriff's office Special Investigation Unit to execute six state search warrants at businesses in several areas of Lake County. The search warrants resulted in the seizure of approximately 22,088 grams (approx. 7,166- 3 oz packages) of Cannabinoids; multiple gram amounts of heroin and cannabis; 3 arrests for Unlawful Possession of a Controlled Substance and Unlawful Delivery of Controlled Substance; \$95,430 US currency, two vehicles, two weapons (.25 caliber Raven MP-25 semi-automatic pistol and Smith & Wesson .380) and hundreds of drug paraphernalia items. “We have long valued our relationship with DEA, who we consider to be the premier drug enforcement agency in the world,” said Lake County Sheriff Mark Curran. “The success of this partnership is evident when you see the results of Operation Log Jam. We have made a sizable dent in the K-2 distribution networks in Lake County and across the country.”

In conjunction with the Illinois Attorney General's Office and Homeland Security Investigations, 12 retailers were approached throughout the state and asked to surrender their cannabinoid products which resulted in the recovery of 4,284 packets (multiple brand names) of cannabinoids surrendered with street value of \$104,123. “This operation was an important step forward in our joint efforts to stop the spread of synthetic drugs,” Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan said. “Vendors who continue to push these drugs should consider this latest action as a warning. These substances are illegal, and they have no place for sale in Illinois stores.”

In Minnesota in conjunction with the Duluth Police Department (DPD); Lake Superior Gang and Drug Task Force; Internal Revenue Service; and the Food and Drug Administration, federal seizure warrants were executed on several bank accounts, which were determined to maintain approximately \$2.8 Million. In addition, law enforcement seized two vehicles valued at approximately \$80,000 USC. Seized from the business was about 20,000 packets of suspected synthetic marijuana, two SKS assault rifles, three loaded handguns, and USC estimated at approximately \$20,000. Three patrons of the store at the time the warrant was executed were arrested on outstanding warrants; approximately nine patrons in the store were in violation of probation; several others were cited on city charges for possession of drug paraphernalia.

In Wisconsin, although no enforcement activity took place yesterday by DEA, several seizures were made in other jurisdictions based on information obtained from ongoing DEA Wisconsin investigations.

Over the past several years, there has been a growing use of, and interest in, synthetic cathinones (stimulants/hallucinogens) sold under the guise of “bath salts” or “plant food.” Marketed under names such as “Ivory Wave,” “Purple Wave,” “Vanilla Sky,” or “Bliss,” these products are comprised of a class of dangerous substances perceived to mimic cocaine, LSD, MDMA, and/or methamphetamine. Users have reported impaired perception, reduced motor control, disorientation, extreme paranoia, and violent episodes. The long-term physical and psychological effects of use are unknown but potentially severe.

These products have become increasingly popular, particularly among teens and young adults and those who mistakenly believe they can bypass the drug testing protocols that have been set up by employers and government agencies to protect public safety. They are sold at a variety of retail outlets, in head shops, and over the Internet. However, they have not been approved by the Food and

Drug Administration (FDA) for human consumption or for medical use, and there is no oversight of the manufacturing process.

Smokable herbal blends marketed as being “legal” and providing a marijuana-like high have also become increasingly popular, particularly among teens and young adults, because they are easily available and, in many cases, they are more potent and dangerous than marijuana. These products consist of plant material that has been coated with dangerous psychoactive compounds that mimic THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. Just as with the synthetic cathinones, synthetic cannabinoids are sold at a variety of retail outlets, in head shops and over the Internet. Brands such as “Spice,” “K2,” “Blaze,” and “Red X Dawn” are labeled as incense to mask their intended purpose.

While many of the designer drugs being marketed today that were seized as part of Operation Log Jam are not specifically prohibited in the Controlled Substances Act (CSA), the Controlled Substance Analogue Enforcement Act of 1986 (AEA) allows these drugs to be treated as controlled substances if they are proven to be chemically and/or pharmacologically similar to a Schedule I or Schedule II controlled substance. A number of cases that are part of Operation Log Jam will be prosecuted federally under this analogue provision, which specifically exists to combat these new and emerging designer drugs.

DEA has used its emergency scheduling authority to combat both synthetic cathinones (the so-called bath salts like Ivory Wave, etc.) and synthetic cannabinoids (the so-called incense products like K2, Spice, etc.), temporarily placing several of these dangerous chemicals into Schedule I of the CSA. Congress has also acted, permanently placing 26 substances into Schedule I of the CSA.

In 2010, poison centers nationwide responded to about 3,200 calls related to synthetic “Spice” and “bath salts.” In 2011, that number jumped to more than 13,000 calls. Sixty percent of the cases involved patients 25 and younger.

For more information about this operation and synthetic designer drugs, visit www.dea.gov. Parents and children are encouraged to educate themselves about the dangers of drugs by visiting DEA’s interactive websites at www.JustThinkTwice.com, www.GetSmartAboutDrugs.com and www.dea.gov.

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