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MADIGAN, IL POISON CENTER ISSUE ALERT TO DANGEROUS FORM OF SYNTHETIC DRUGS***Attorney General, Illinois Poison Center Warn Illinoisans to Spike in ER visits & Death Due to Synthetic Drugs***

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan and the Illinois Poison Center issued an alert today to reports of new, deadly forms of synthetic drugs turning up across the country leading to increased reports of illness, emergency room visits and deaths tied to the drug's usage.

Madigan and Illinois Poison Center Medical Director Dr. Michael Wahl issued the joint alert following media reports across the country that show many states have seen an increased number of hospital visits and in some cases deaths linked to "Spice," or "K2," which are street names for the varying types of synthetic marijuana which contain chemical compounds designed to mimic the effects of THC.

Synthetic drugs pose significant risk after being ingested because the user has no way of knowing what chemicals were used to make that particular package of drugs. Manufacturers of synthetic drugs consistently alter drug formulas to try to evade state laws.

"Ingesting a package of synthetic drugs is like playing Russian roulette," Madigan said. "Anyone who considers using synthetic drugs is risking their life because there is no way to determine what chemicals were used and in what amounts."

"The IPC commends Attorney General Madigan on her efforts to combat synthetic drug use across the state. As the nation's oldest poison center, serving the largest population base in the nation, the IPC is uniquely positioned to aid the Attorney General's office by identifying and monitoring trends in poisonings and toxic substances," Wahl said. "With emerging public health threats, the IPC is ready and able to provide Illinoisans and our health care professionals with data, trends and comprehensive information and treatment advice."

Synthetic drugs are banned in Illinois under a law the Attorney General helped pass in 2012. The law amended the state's Food, Drug and Cosmetics Act to address the fact that synthetic drugs were being packaged with misleading labels designed to give the impression that the products are legal and "not intended for human consumption" in order to be sold in retail stores. The law now defines a "synthetic drug product" as any product containing a controlled substance not regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The law makes it a Class 2 felony, punishable by three to seven years in prison and a \$100,000 first offense fine, to sell or possess with intent to distribute any form of synthetic drug products in Illinois. The law also significantly increased the penalty for selling or possessing with intent to distribute any drug that is misleadingly labeled, making it a Class 2 felony.

Attorney General Madigan has worked on many fronts to increase awareness of the dangers of synthetic drugs. As usage rose in Illinois, Madigan hosted the first-ever statewide emergency summit in 2011 with state, county and local law enforcement officers, educators, health care professionals and parents to talk about the growing use of synthetic drugs. The summit led to the launch of "Operation Smoked Out," a statewide initiative to remove synthetic drugs from retail outlets and the law's passage. Madigan's office also has conducted numerous workshops with prosecutors and law enforcement authorities throughout Illinois to increase the focus on investigating and prosecuting these cases.

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