

# Memorandum



**Date:** July 18, 2012

**To:** Honorable Chairman Joe A. Martinez  
and Members, Board of County Commissioners

**From:** Carlos A. Gimenez  
Mayor 

**Subject:** Response to Directive – Dangers of Synthetic Marijuana

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Pursuant to your directive at the May 15, 2012 Board of County Commissioners meeting, the Miami-Dade Police Department has created the attached bulletin concerning the dangers associated with "synthetic marijuana" and other synthetic substances. The bulletin has been distributed to all law enforcement agencies, fire departments, and hospitals located within Miami-Dade County.

In addition, Miami-Dade Police Department continues to provide public outreach and awareness on the dangers associated with these substances.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact James K. Loftus, Director, Miami-Dade Police Department, at 305-471-3518.

## Attachment

c: Genaro "Chip" Iglesias, Deputy Mayor  
James K. Loftus, Director, Miami-Dade Police Department



## The Threat of Synthetic Drugs

June 2012



Examples of Synthetic Marijuana

### SITUATION

The Miami-Dade Police Department is providing the following "Synthetic Substance Awareness" bulletin to inform all first responder professionals, health specialists to include medical institutions, as well as local communities, of the inherent dangers associated with synthetic substances. Synthetic substances, when utilized for human consumption, are extremely dangerous and offer the same effects as illegal drugs. These powerful synthetic substances are specifically manufactured to mimic marijuana, Ecstasy, cocaine and other illegal narcotics.

Many of these synthetic narcotics are being marketed and sold as incense, bath salts and synthetic marijuana. Producers of these synthetic narcotics have skirted state and federal drug laws by constantly changing the compounds found within the synthetic substance, and labeling the packets, "Not for human consumption."

**Synthetic Marijuana** (synthetic cannabinoids): Synthetic marijuana is better known as "fake marijuana." It is made up of plant material (herbs, flowers, stems, leaves), not marijuana, and sprayed with chemicals that mimic tetrahydrocannabinol or THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. According to the Office of National Drug Control Policy, synthetic cannabinoids in herbal incense products were first detected in the United States in November 2008, by the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) forensic laboratory. These products were first encountered by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agency.

Common names for synthetic marijuana include:

- K2
- Spice
- Genie
- LOL
- Sense
- Demon
- Skunk
- Zohai
- Legal Devil
- Tsunami
- Scooby Snax

**Bath Salts:** Synthetic cathinones labeled as “bath salts” became known in late 2011 and are listed behind marijuana, Ecstasy, and cocaine as the fourth most popular street drug. These synthetic products are not the same as bath salts such as Epsom salt (magnesium sulfate) or sea salt (sodium chloride) used for therapeutic additions to baths. Products containing Epsom salt or sea salt are found at mainstream retailers, whereas products falsely marketed as “bath salts” are typically purchased in convenience stores, gas stations, head shops and through clandestine internet sites.

Many of these products contain methylenedioxypropylamphetamine (MDPV), mephedrone, and methylone, which are synthetic derivatives of cathinone, a Schedule I drug listed in FSS 893.03. Synthetic cathinones may also be referred to as “synthetic cocaine”, “bath powder”, “herbal incense”, “plant food” and are marketed with names to include:

- White Lightning
- Hurricane Charlie
- Pixie Dust
- Bliss
- Blue Silk
- Vanilla Sky
- Crazy Train
- White Slut
- Eight Ballz



Examples of Synthetic Bath Salts

#### Recent Local Incidents:

Below are some recently reported incidents in Miami-Dade County where individuals were found in possession of synthetic drugs or were suspected of using them:

- On June 6, 2012, North Miami Beach Police arrested a man who exposed himself to a three year old girl at a playground. The subject had “bath salts” in his possession.
- On June 2, 2012, a homeless man allegedly growled and tried to bite a North Miami Beach Police Officer's hand while in custody. It was believed that the man had taken the synthetic bath salt, Cloud 9.
- On May 26, 2012, City of Miami Police shot and killed a man who growled at them while ripping the flesh off a homeless man's face on the MacArthur Causeway. It is believed that the subject was high on “bath salts.”

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR HOMELAND SECURITY

With the increasing use of synthetic drugs around our County, State, and nation, producers of these drugs are circumventing the emergency ban placed on them by the DEA by altering the chemical makeup, making synthetic drugs easily marketable and very profitable.

Users are learning how to use these drugs to get the euphoric or hallucinatory effects without psychotic episodes. Abuse with students, teenagers, and youth in general, may become more prevalent since they are usually sold on the internet, or in gas stations, convenience stores, head shops, smoke shops, and tattoo parlors. In Florida, there have been numerous reported incidents of high school youths overdosing on these synthetic substances. Several violent encounters have also been reported by law enforcement agencies.

Additionally, calls to the American Association of Poison Control Centers have escalated since this synthetic drug threat emerged.

### **SYNTHETIC DRUG USE INDICATORS**

Synthetic drugs that are marketed as "bath salts" products and synthetic marijuana have a stimulant effect on the central nervous system. They pose health risks with similar symptoms to include:

- excessive sweating
- headaches
- heart palpitations
- nausea
- mood swings
- withdrawn
- increased heart rate
- elevated blood pressure
- vomiting

Despite horrible side effects, the cravings are so intense that users typically remain addicted to the drug. The effects can be more devastating if overdosed, which may cause:

- paranoid delusions
- hallucinations
- combativeness
- seizures

"Bath salts" include more severe side effects such as:

- abnormal increase in body temperature
- super-human strength

Experts say synthetic drugs are psychoactive, with delusional beliefs acted upon in violent ways.

### **OFFICER SAFETY AWARENESS/ANALYST COMMENTS**

Synthetic drugs are an emerging threat. The use of synthetic bath salts and synthetic marijuana is not only a potential hazard to the user, but also to the people they come in contact with, especially First Responders.

With the sale of substances such as synthetic marijuana and "bath salts" on the rise nationally, incidents involving these drugs will likely continue and increase. All community stakeholders should be alert to individuals who may be exhibiting the effects of synthetic drug use. As always, law enforcement officers should continue to be vigilant of any suspicious activity or calls regarding incidents involving individuals under the influence of narcotics or alcohol.

#### **Sources:**

Watchline 05.31.12

FDNY Fireguard "Bath Salts" 05.31.12

Florida Fusion Center Brief #:12-150, "Synthetic Substances Ban"

Ohio State Highway Patrol –Criminal Intelligence Unit #2012-0498

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/melaniehaiken/2012/06/04/bath-salts-a-deadly-new-drug-with-a-deceptively-innocent-name/2/>

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/ondcp-fact-sheets/synthetic-drugs-k2-spice-bath-salts>

<http://pediatrics.med.miami.edu/documents/fpicn-newsletter-2011-spring.pdf>

<http://www.metrodrug.org/web/drug-information/synthetic-stimulantsbath-salts/>

<http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/story/2012-04-11/synthetic-drugs-bath-salts/54187138/1>