



Drug Alert Watch

Use of Synthetic Cannabinoid Products by Teens and Young Adults Increasing

U . S . D E P A R T M E N T O F J U S T I C E

EWS Report 000006

May 18, 2010

Law enforcement officials in many areas of the country are reporting increasing use of synthetic cannabinoid products by teens and young adults as these products are widely available. Often hyped as a legal alternative to marijuana, individuals subject to scheduled or random drug screening tests allegedly also have used synthetic cannabinoid products to avoid a positive test for cannabis and the resulting consequences. Many synthetic cannabinoid users also abuse marijuana.

Synthetic cannabinoid products typically include olive-colored herbs, combination of herbs, or plant materials enhanced with a delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) synthetic analog. When smoked, synthetic cannabinoid products mimic the hallucinogenic effects of marijuana. However, they have many adverse effects, including panic attacks, agitation, tachycardia (in the range of 110 to 150 beats per minute), elevated blood pressure (in the 140-160/100-110 range), anxiety, pallor, numbness and tingling, vomiting (which can be severe and may require sedation), hallucinations (which can be intense), and, in some cases, tremors, and seizures. Users report effects last between 30 minutes and 2 hours. Common brand names for synthetic cannabinoids include K2, Spice, Spice Gold, Spice Diamond, Yucatan Fire, Solar Flare, K2 Summit, Genie, PEP Spice, and Fire n' Ice.

Synthetic cannabinoid products are produced primarily internationally, but also produced domestically. Synthetic cannabinoid products are generally sold on Internet websites; however, they are becoming increasingly available at "headshops" and similar locations. The products often are marketed as "natural herbal incense" and include warnings that they "are not for human consumption."

This SENTRY Watch is based upon source materials that have not been validated and/or researched by NDIC. It is intended to serve as an immediate alert to law enforcement and public health officials of potential substance abuse problems.

If you would like to report an emerging drug issue in your area or have questions or comments about SENTRY, please e-mail us at NDIC.Sentry@usdoj.gov or visit us at www.justice.gov/ndic/sentry



Drug Alert Report

K2—"Spice"

March 10, 2010

Information contained in this report on K2 "Spice" is intended for distribution to all regional law enforcement agencies due to its potential for illicit distribution and its dangerous effects on juvenile users.

Summary. K2, or SPICE, is a new illicit drug product that has begun to appear in a limited number of drug markets in the United States. This product is a small package of herbal blends and appears to be treated with differing versions of synthetic Cannabinoids. Effects are reportedly analogous to marijuana but include additional dangers to users such as panic attacks, heart palpitations, hallucinations, delusions, vomiting, increased agitation, dilated pupils, and other symptoms.

Background. The Illinois-Missouri area reports increasing incidents of "herbal incense" containing new synthetic Cannabinoids such as JWH 018, CP 47497 and HU-210 being sold in smoke shops. There are many different brand names for this product which adds confusion for first responders, hospital staff, and prevention professionals.

German researchers discovered the synthetic Cannabinoids present in Spice and the U.S. Custom Service banned the importation of the product in late 2009. However, other products have popped up to fill the void of the Spice ban such as "K2" in the St. Louis metro area, which has been linked to at least 30 hospitalizations, and "Red Dragon Smoke" in the DePaul neighborhood of Chicago. These products can also be purchased over the internet for about \$35 per gram. It is suspect that there are, or will be, many other brand names popping up containing the same synthetic Cannabinoids as authorities attempt to control these intoxicants. If you have an incident where a subject is experiencing panic attacks, heart palpi-

tations, dilated pupils, or other symptoms but the hospital toxicology report is negative for drugs, you may have a synthetic Cannabinoids adverse reaction case.

Drug Testing. There is no accepted urine drug test for the presence of the chemicals in this product and no criminal laws for possession. Reportedly the hospital toxicology may be negative for drugs which may be an indicator for the synthetic Cannabinoids in this product.

Several states are considering legislation at this time. Consequently, it might be useful to ask victims what product they smoked and then re-search the name. Many pro-drug forums have multiple postings of specific product names with the degree of intoxication each product produces.

Reporting Incidents of Use. The DEA National Forensic Lab is asking for any encounters with these drugs to be reported at 202.307.7183 Attn: ODE section.

Local Drug Market Presence. According to DHS reporting, two shipments of herbal incense were shipped to New Port

Richey, Florida, that totaled 31.65 Kilograms which tested positive for HU-210. The shipments had originated from the Czech Republic.

Drug Information. Several active ingredients have been reported to be contained in K2 that give the users a "high" similar to marijuana. To





Drug Alert Report

K2—Spice

March 9, 2010

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date, the active ingredients reported are synthetic versions of Cannabinoids:

- **HU-210** is listed by DEA as a Schedule 1 substance. It is a synthetic Cannabinoid that was first synthesized in 1988 by a group at the Hebrew University. HU-210 is 100 to 800 times more potent than natural THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. The effects of HU-210 has an extended duration of action.
- **WH-018** is an analgesic chemical from the aminoalkylindole family, which also acts as a Cannabinoids agonist at both the CB₁ and CB₂ receptors.
- **CP 47,497** is another Cannabinoids receptor agonist drug, developed by Pfizer in the 1980s. It has analgesic effects and is typically used in scientific research.

Profile of Expected Users and Pricing. Teens as well as other age groups may be inclined to use this product due to its similarities to marijuana.

Available price information indicates K2 has been sold since 2006 as incense or potpourri for approximately \$30 to \$40 for a 3 gram bag.

In the last month, Dr. Anthony Scalzo, a professor of toxicology at Saint Louis University, has seen nearly 30 cases of teenagers experiencing these

adverse effects after smoking the fake weed, a legal substance that reportedly offers a marijuana-like high. "K2 use is not limited to the Midwest; reports of its use are cropping up all over the country," Scalzo said. "I think K2 is likely a bigger problem than we're aware of at this time." For instance, Atlanta has seen about 12 cases recently.



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