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Criminal Indices Check

Situational Awareness

Request for Information

New Unregulated Psychoactive Substances Marketed as “Bath Salts”

INTRODUCTION

This bulletin was produced to provide situational awareness regarding new psychoactive substances that are being marketed as “bath salts.” These substances, when ingested, circumvent existing drug laws and are potentially harmful. Considering that these substances are still relatively new and have not been fully researched, it should be stressed that a significant amount of information presented in this bulletin derives from open sources and are yet to be scientifically confirmed.



OVERVIEW

Unregulated psychoactive substances marketed as “bath salts” are among the latest in a series of legal synthetic substances that, when used improperly, offer alternatives to illegal drugs. Suspected as being produced as legal substitutes for ecstasy, cocaine, and amphetamines, “bath salts” are powerful stimulant drugs that are suspected to have been designed to avoid legal prosecution, and are commonly available on the Internet and in specialty smoke shops. They can be comprised of different unregulated chemical substances and are being sold under a variety of names or brands. Unconfirmed sources indicate that “bath salts” are becoming increasingly popular due to the perception that they pose a seemingly safer alternative to illegal methods of getting “high” and can easily be obtained

Photo courtesy of the Gulf Coast HIDTA over the Internet (e.g. eBay). Concerns regarding the safety of these drugs have prompted many European countries to take measures to stop the imports and sale of these products within their respective borders. Recent seizures nationwide suggest “bath salts” are making inroads in the U.S., including Florida, thus becoming a substance of potential concern.

STREET NAMES

The following is a sample of designer “bath salt” products associated with unregulated psychoactive substances that are potentially harmful:

- Ivory Wave
- Vanilla Sky
- Pure Ivory
- Whack
- Bolivian Bath
- Purple Wave
- Charge+
- Ocean Burst
- Sextacy
- Gloom
- Purple Rain
- Salt
- Fly
- Hurricane Charlie
- Crush
- White Rush



Photo courtesy of the Gulf Coast HIDTA

CHEMICAL MAKEUP

Although only a small sample of “bath salts” have been tested, those that have – such as Ivory Wave, Vanilla Sky, and Whack - suggest that the principal active ingredient in these products is MDPV (Methylenedioxypropylvalerone), a highly potent synthetic cathinone derivative. Following the decision by a number of European governments to include MDPV on a list of controlled substances in mid-2010, it seems that the chemical composition of “bath salts” has changed. Limited testing in the United Kingdom suggests that post-April 2010 “bath salts” mainly consisted of 2-DPMP (2-diphenylmethylpiperidine) and DMAA (Dimethylamylamine). 2-DPMP, a substance closely linked to the drug methylphenidate (Ritalin) that exhibits similar pharmacological effects associated with amphetamines, was placed on an import ban in the UK in November 2010. DMAA was marketed as a nasal decongestant in the late 1940s and is currently marketed as a dietary supplement. Cutting agents, such as the common local anesthetic Lidocaine, have also been found in addition to the active ingredients.

LEGAL STATUS

To date, the majority of the primary substances analyzed in “bath salt” have been placed on controlled substance lists in several foreign countries; however, at present, these substances are legal to possess and distribute in the United States. It should be noted, in the case of military personnel, command level memorandums from each branch prohibit the use of intoxicating substances, with the exception of a reasonable amount of legal substances during non-duty hours and the lawful use of prescription medications. Memorandums have also been enacted immediately changing the *Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention and Treatment* regulations prohibiting any intoxicating substance other than legal and legally used products. Violating these memorandums and regulations are punishable under UCMJ Article 92, to wit: failure to obey an order or regulation.

Furthermore, as this problem with the use of “bath salts” increases, other states such as Louisiana, have enacted emergency scheduling provisions to make the possession and distribution of these substances illegal as of January 6, 2011. It is anticipated that several other states are on track to follow suit.

APPEARANCE

“Bath salts” appear as pure white to light brown substances and are made up of a significantly hydrophilic and crumbly powder with a slight odor. They are packaged as “soothing bath salts” and marketed under a variety of names such as Ivory Wave, Vanilla Sky, and White Rush. The packages are labeled “concentrated bath salts” and are usually sold in 200mg, 250mg, or 500mg packets. “Bath salt” products often contain a note declaring “not for human consumption,” in order to circumvent existing control mechanisms. The list of ingredients on “bath salt” products often gives no indication of the presence of psychoactive substances. Although labeled as “soothing bath salts” to get around food and drug legislation, they sell for around \$30 per 500mg packet. These “bath salts” give users a euphoric feeling after they snort it, said to be “more intense than that brought on by cocaine.”

METHODS OF USE

Although “bath salt” products contain no specific directions for use, they are usually snorted, but can also be smoked or swallowed.

TOXICITY & SIDE EFFECTS

“Bath salt” products are known to produce certain side effects, some of which are quite severe. The following is the list of milder, short-term side effects associated with consumption of this drug as reported by available open sources:

- Increased heart rate
- Agitation
- Diminished requirement for sleep
- Lack of appetite
- Increased alertness and awareness
- Anxiety
- Fits and delusions
- Nosebleeds

More serious side effects associated with these drugs reportedly include:

- Muscle spasms
- Blood circulation problems, including increased blood pressure
- Kidney failure
- Seizures
- Muscle damage
- Loss of bowel control
- Hallucinations
- Aggression
- Severe paranoia
- Panic attacks
- Sharp increase in body temperature
- Risk of renal failure

In most extreme cases, powdered “bath salt” products have been linked to drug induced deaths. For example, available open sources claim they may have played a role in the following:

- August 2010 death of a 35-year-old woman in the United Kingdom who reportedly died due to the effects caused by long term use;

- August 2010 death of a 24-year-old man in the United Kingdom who reportedly jumped from a cliff top after he experienced the severe hallucinations associated with “Ivory Wave.”

The long-term effects largely remain unknown.

PRIMARY USERS

Open sources report that “bath salts” are mainly popular with younger people between the ages of 14 and 25; however, users of all ages have been reported. In Europe, Australia, and New Zealand, these substances are mainly associated with party goers, but use is also attributed to belief in the drug’s weight loss and aphrodisiac capabilities.

THE FLORIDA CONNECTION

Available open sources maintain that the mental and physical dangers associated with unregulated, synthetic substances packaged as “bath salts” have prompted a number of countries - New Zealand, Sweden, Australia, England, Ireland, and Denmark - to enact laws prohibiting the sale and import of such products. Nonetheless, powdered “bath salt” products currently remain legal in the United States. Recent intelligence in the U.S., and specifically in Florida, indicate that Ivory Wave, White Rush, and its designer equivalents have arrived. While current data is limited on the use of these “bath salt” products within the state, efforts to gather better field intelligence is underway. Initial law enforcement reporting suggests widespread availability of these products. A recent search on a popular Internet auction/purchasing website reveals several distributors within the continental United States (i.e.: New York, Utah, and Alaska). While traditional cocaine has consistently remained available within the State of Florida, the potential for large scale use, distribution, and health concerns related to these “bath salts” has the drug enforcement community analyzing the impending impact.

As of January 2011, FDLE laboratories analyses can confirm the presence of the following chemicals contained within “bath salts” seized by law enforcement agencies while conducting enforcement activities:

1. 3,4 - Methylenedioxymethcathinone (Methylone)
2. 3,4 - Methylenedioxypropylrovalerone (MDPV)
3. 4 - Methylmethcathinone (Mephedrone)
4. 3 - Methoxymethcathinone
5. 3 - Fluoromethcathinone
6. 4 - Fluoromethcathinone

Furthermore, the Florida Department of Health has reported numerous health-related calls to both the Florida Poison Control Center and emergency rooms concerning the use of “bath salts;” however, this data is very raw due to the infancy of this new synthetic product. The Florida Poison Control Center has received several calls regarding exposure to this product with the majority of these calls being placed by individuals 16 to 30 years of age. While there have been reports of “bath salts” abuse throughout Florida, the law enforcement and medical community cannot confirm any reported overdoses or deaths. However, during the weekend of January 21-22, 2011, a north Florida emergency room physician reported to FDLE an excess of six emergency related patients admitted due to both the ingestion and injection of “bath salts” in correlation with increased awareness.

Any agency with additional information on incidents involving “bath salts” is asked to please contact Inspector David Gross, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Office of Statewide Intelligence, (850) 410-8389, or e-mail DavidGross@fdle.state.fl.us.

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If you would like more information about this intelligence brief, or if you have information that you would like posted in a bulletin, please contact the Florida Department of Law Enforcement at (850) 410-7645.

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