

AG Schimel: Joins Milwaukee medical examiner, police chief to warn public on dangers of synthetic cannabinoids

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MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Brad Schimel, along with Milwaukee County Medical Examiner Dr. Brian Peterson and Milwaukee Police Chief Alfonso Morales, is warning citizens about the dangers of synthetic cannabinoid (“fake weed”) use, as Wisconsin has experienced two deaths in Milwaukee County in recent days, which may be linked to the use of synthetic cannabinoids. Photos of synthetic cannabinoid products found in Wisconsin are attached.

“I’m making an appeal to any retailers who are selling these dangerous synthetic cannabinoids and demanding you pull them off your shelves immediately,” said Attorney General Schimel. “While it is too early to attribute the two most recent deaths to synthetic cannabinoids, evidence at the scene and symptoms exhibited by the victims point to synthetic cannabinoids likely being involved. If, after our investigation concludes, we determine the source of the substances involved are synthetic cannabinoids, we will work to prosecute anyone involved in delivering these deadly drugs.”

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services released a warning on June 21, 2018, as use of synthetic cannabinoids resulted in more than a dozen Wisconsinites requiring hospitalization for severe bleeding.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has also issued warnings of severe bleeding and death related to the use of synthetic cannabinoids, as the cases have increased across the country. Illinois has had more than 160 cases and at least four deaths related to these drugs. The cases in Illinois were tested at a lab and found to be positive for Brodifacoum, which is a highly toxic chemical found in

rat poison.

Although the exact cause of death has not been confirmed yet in the Milwaukee-area cases, the victims' symptoms and initial law enforcement investigation indicate that the use of synthetic cannabinoids, laced with rat poison, resulted in the victims bleeding to death. An update will be provided after confirmation. Due to the high probability of a link between the two Milwaukee-area deaths and synthetic cannabinoids and the danger to public safety, law enforcement are issuing this urgent advisory today.

DOJ and local law enforcement are urging anyone using synthetic cannabinoids to cease immediately and destroy them. If you or someone you know experiences unexpected and prolonged bruising or bleeding, particularly with minimal trauma (such as shaving or brushing teeth), contact the Wisconsin Poison Center for guidance at 1-800-222-1222 or www.wisconsinpoison.org.

Synthetic cannabinoids can be found across the U.S. in convenience stores, gas stations, drug paraphernalia shops, novelty stores, and online. If you see them being sold, please contact your local law enforcement agency for follow-up.

Persons or businesses who manufacture or sell synthetic cannabinoids may be subject to civil and/or criminal penalties and imprisonment. DOJ recently resolved two cases involving retailers involved in the sale of synthetic cannabinoids and has one case pending. In one of the cases, a synthetic cannabinoid retailer was subject to a judgment that bars the retailer from selling or assisting in the sale of synthetic cannabinoid substances and requires them to pay \$1,283,000 in civil forfeitures, assessments, and costs.

People who have used these drugs and experience severe or unexplained bleeding or bruising should call 9-1-1 or have someone take them to an emergency department immediately. If you have used these products and are not bleeding, you should still see a health care provider, as Brodifacoum can accumulate and remain in your system for a long period of time, and could still cause bleeding.

Individuals who cannot stop using synthetic cannabinoids should seek help from substance abuse treatment programs.

Synthetic cannabinoid products are sold under various names including:

- Black Mamba
- Bling Blang Monkey
- Bombay Blue
- Climax
- Cloud 9
- Fake Weed
- Genie
- Joker
- K2
- Kisha Cole
- Legal Weed
- Matrix
- OMG
- Phantom
- Red, Blue, or Yellow Giant
- Releaf
- Scooby Snax
- Spice
- Wet Lucy
- White Tiger
- Zohai

For more information on synthetic cannabinoids, please visit the CDC website.