

Dept. of Justice: DOJ and Vilas County Sheriff's Office Find Meth Lab in Eagle River by Using NPLeX Database

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EAGLE RIVER, Wis. – A joint investigation conducted by the Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) and the Vilas County Sheriff's Office led to the discovery of a meth lab in Eagle River on March 30. Two individuals have been charged with multiple felonies as a result of the investigation.

Investigators obtained a search warrant for a home on US Hwy 45 after review of the National Precursor Log Exchange (NPLeX) database revealed individuals residing at the residence had purchased unusual amounts of pseudoephedrine. NPLeX is a real-time electronic log that tracks sales of over-the-counter medications containing pseudoephedrine.

"In its less than six-month existence, NPLeX is already proving its worth," said Attorney General Schimel. "Through use of NPLeX and strong investigative work, DCI and the Vilas County Sheriff's Office were able to prevent the production of highly dangerous and addictive drugs. I appreciate the Wisconsin State Legislature giving law enforcement this valuable new tool."

Vilas County Sheriff investigators conducted a routine review of pharmacy logs on the NPLeX database and discovered that two people had purchased more than the legal amount of pseudoephedrine within a 30-day period from pharmacies around the state. Pseudoephedrine, a common cold ingredient found in some over-the-counter allergy and cold medications can also be illegally used to manufacture methamphetamine in small, home-based labs. The two individuals were also

observed buying lithium batteries and cold packs, which are two ingredients that are also used in the manufacturing of methamphetamine in home based clandestine meth labs.

“Another joint investigation that resulted in great results,” said Vilas County Sheriff Joe Fath. “We have a very good partnership with Department of Justice.”

The two individuals, Stephanie Wolfe and Scott Schmidt, were charged with six felonies for manufacturing methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine, possession of methamphetamine waste, possessing methamphetamine precursor chemicals, possessing drug paraphernalia to manufacture methamphetamine, purchasing of pseudoephedrine greater than 7.5 grams within a 30 day period and one misdemeanor count of receiving or concealing stolen property. Their bonds were set at \$5,000 and \$10,000, respectively.

All suspects are innocent until proven guilty.

In November 2017, Governor Scott Walker signed Assembly Bill 306, also, known as the NPLeX bill, into law which allowed Wisconsin to join the National Precursor Log Exchange Program. Attorney General Schimel testified in favor of the NPLeX bill, which was authored by Rep. Cody Horlacher and former Senator Shelia Harsdorf.

The NPLeX system has been identified as a valuable tracking tool to prevent “smurfing” and reduce the manufacturing of meth. Smurfing is a term that describes when small home-based labs target small gas stations, hardware stores, pharmacies, and other retailers that use a paper log system by traveling to the different locations and purchasing the maximum amount of pseudoephedrine.

NPLeX is available at no cost to state agencies and its users, including pharmacies, retailers, and law enforcement when a state passes electronic tracking legislation.