

Drug Intelligence Report

DRUG ENFORCEMENT ADMINISTRATION
INTELLIGENCE DIVISION

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(U) Bath Salts

Introduction

(U) Bath salts are part of a new wave of designer drugs marketed as innocuous products - they take advantage of current legal loopholes that allow them to be promoted and consumed as “legal highs” (i.e., products that provide the same or similar effects as illegal substances like cocaine, methamphetamine, and MDMA).

Bath Salts Are Stimulants

(U) Substances originally synthesized as research chemicals are now marketed as “novelty use” merchandise “not meant for human consumption” to effectively circumvent federal laws and control regulations. Unfortunately, these products are, in fact, being consumed and are having deleterious effects on users. Poison centers across the United States received 302 calls concerning bath salts in 2010. As of October 31, 2011, poison centers had already fielded 5,625 bath salt calls - over 18 times the amount of calls received in all of 2010.

(U) Methylenedioxypropylvalerone (MDPV), methylone, and mephedrone are the chemicals most often found in bath salts. They are synthetic derivatives of cathinone, a potent central nervous system (CNS) stimulant. CNS stimulants raise blood pressure, increase heart rate, and often cause dizziness and chest pains. Bath salts may also induce psychoactive effects as well, such as irritability, paranoia, delusions, panic attacks, and suicidal thoughts. Users describe “good trips” as enjoying a sense of euphoria, which then tapers off to a milder stimulation, much like amphetamines or ecstasy; however, these effects frequently give way to “bad trips” like those associated with LSD.

(U) Bath salts are typically sold in packages of 250-500 mg and cost approximately \$25-50 USD. They are available for purchase on the internet, as well as in shops specializing in products of interest to drug users (i.e., head shops) and in convenience stores across the United States. Bath salts are a white or off-white powder, which users typically snort, smoke, or ingest intravenously. Due to its chemical composition, bath salts usage is not detectable in standard drug tests. Some examples of commercial names for bath salts include White Lightning, Vanilla Sky, Cloud Nine, and Ivory Wave.

Outlook

(U) On October 21, 2011, DEA used its emergency scheduling authority to control MDPV, methylone, and mephedrone. Except as authorized by law, this action makes possessing and selling these chemicals, or the



products that contain them, illegal in the U.S. They are designated as Schedule 1 substances, the most restrictive category under the Controlled Substances Act. This temporary scheduling action will remain in effect for at least one year while the DEA and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services further study whether these chemicals should be permanently controlled.

(U) Due to the composition of synthetic substances, the smallest alteration can produce a completely different chemical in name and structure, thus avoiding the specific wording of relevant statutes. Legislation will, therefore, need to be continuously updated to keep up with these ever-changing products. Education about the dangers synthetic substances present to persons is still one of the best tools law enforcement has in its arsenal to combat use of these drugs.

This report was prepared by DEA's Africa/Far East Investigative Intelligence Unit of the Investigative Intelligence Section. This report reflects information current as of June 2011. Comments are welcome and may be addressed to the Investigative Intelligence Section at (202) 307-8050. Requests for copies may be emailed to the Intelligence Production Unit, Intelligence Division, DEA Headquarters at IntellProduction@usdoj.gov.