



Public Release

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Contact: ISP District 1, 615 West Wilbur Ave. Coeur d'Alene, ID 83815

(208) 209-8620

Or the ISP Public Affairs Office isppio@isp.idaho.gov.

Law Enforcement Warns of Sharp Increase in Fentanyl-Related Fatal Overdoses in Kootenai County

Today, law enforcement officials from Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), U.S Attorney's Office, Idaho State Police, Kootenai County Sheriff's Office, Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene Police Departments are warning the public about a sharp increase in fatal overdoses connected to the highly potent and often deadly drug, fentanyl.

Over the last eight days, five fatal overdoses have been reported in Kootenai County involving counterfeit prescription pills and other illicit narcotics suspected to be laced with fentanyl. These deaths involve four males and one female ranging in age from 15 to 60. It appears at this time all five deaths were accidental and unrelated.

While police are investigating the sources, they hope to halt the deadly trend by alerting the public and encouraging parents to talk to their teens about the dangers of these narcotics.

Anyone with information on who is supplying counterfeit prescription pills is urged to contact Idaho State Police at the Idaho Drug Tip Hotline 1-800-524-7277 or the Coeur d'Alene Police Department at 208-769-2320.

Nationally, overdose deaths continue to rise at alarming rates, with a noticeable increase during the pandemic. Nearly 90,000 people died as a result of drug overdose in the United States from November 1, 2019, through October 31, 2020, the largest number of drug-related deaths recorded within a single year, and more than 74 percent of those deaths involved an opioid. Overdose deaths involving a synthetic opioid rose 54.7 percent and appear to be the primary driver of the increase in total overdose deaths.

In Kootenai County last year, overdose deaths rose by 37 percent, from 24 in 2019 to 33 in 2020.

Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, and up to 50 times more potent than heroin. Even tiny doses, as little as two milligrams, the size of two grains of salt, is a fatal dose for most people. Mexican drug cartels are manufacturing mass quantities of fentanyl and counterfeit prescription pills containing fentanyl for distribution throughout North America.

Counterfeit prescription pills look exactly like legitimate prescription pills and are incredibly dangerous because the amount of fentanyl varies from each pill, even in the same batch. In other

words, there is no way to tell whether a pill purchased illicitly on the internet or the street is actually Oxycodone or a more powerful drug.

Unless prescription drugs are obtained from an authorized medical provider or pharmacy, the public should not consume or even handle these pills. The synthetic opioids contained in them are often lethal if consumed even if in the smallest amounts, and may be lethal simply touching them. All Idahoans are urged to only use prescription drugs prescribed to them by legitimate health care providers and obtained from their pharmacy.

Attached Images:

The following are images of counterfeit prescription pills containing fentanyl, including images taken of drug seizures in North Idaho and Eastern Washington.

Photos Courtesy of the DEA.



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