



Fentanyl:

Know the facts & Stay Safe in the Property Room...!

What Steps Have You Taken?

Special points of interest:

- Stop Field Testing
- Use nitrile gloves only.
- Don't use alcohol gel (hand sanitizer) after handling narcotics.
- Have access to Narcan at all times.
- Utilize proper PPE
- Have thorough transportation guidelines

-If you live in California and work in a Law Enforcement Property Evidence Unit, the chances are great that you have either heard about or participating in training on the power opioid known as **fentanyl**. The synthetic drug is incredibly toxic and **extremely dangerous**. As with most dangers on the street faced by our Officers, we too are in harm's way. Much of the time, we really have no idea as to the level of potential exposure we face. From contaminated packaging, to miss-identification of the contents and subsequent improper handling, we often have no idea what is lurking in that package. So first thing we can do is recognize that this is not

just a patrol or investigations problem, but an "US" issue. And when I say "us", I am including our CSI & Crime Lab personnel, Deputy Coroners, Property / Evidence staff and so many other elements of law enforcement within this hidden hazard. In this special edition news brief, I will give you specific details on how to properly package suspected fentanyl, helpful tips on bringing an end to Field-Testing, and the do's / don'ts of PPE. What can you do to stay safe in the Property Room...?

-James Nally



A lethal dose of heroin vs. fentanyl.



Example: Counterfeit medications containing fentanyl.

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Let's See How Your Agency Stacks Up.

The main precautions I want you to "LIVE BY" are the following:

- Immediately stop field-testing! Easier said than done? See information included in this newsletter to understand how agencies are handling.

- Develop strict packaging guidelines and procedures for special handling. (See detailed packaging guidelines in this newsletter)
- Push to acquire Naloxone (Narcan) for all areas of your department that would poten-

tially encounter an exposure.

- Consider the transportation requirements of your agency for taking packages to the lab, in-between stations etc.

-James Nally

A WARNING ABOUT FIELD TESTING DRUGS FROM THE DEA



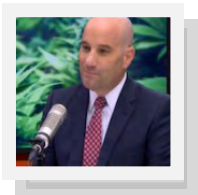
Example: a lethal dose of fentanyl relative to US Penny.

The DEA has advised law enforcement across the country against field testing drugs that you suspect contain fentanyl. The DEA also suggests that you should treat all unknown substances as if it were fentanyl. That is because cops across the country are finding fentanyl in cocaine, marijuana, methampheta-

mine, synthetic cannabinoids (spice), synthetic cathenones (bath salts) and just about every other drug on the market. That is great advice to avoid field-testing drugs if you suspect its fentanyl. However, what if you do not know 100% that fentanyl isn't in the sample you have? Fentanyl looks like many of

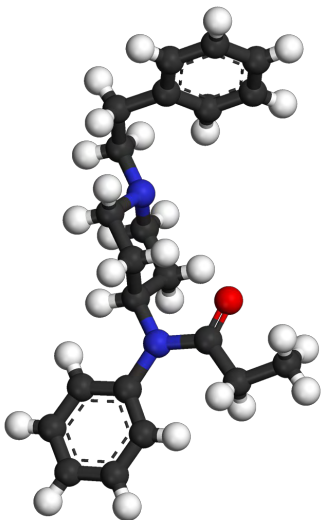
the drugs I've just mentioned and an officer would not know fentanyl is in the sample until it is too late.

Courtesy of Keith Graves.
<https://gravesassociates.com/>



DA's & Administrators Weigh In on Field Testing Drugs

"This inability to change with the times, though, has put many officers at risk of fentanyl exposure."



Many agencies and district attorneys currently require field-testing drugs. The reason is straightforward in their mind: the drug needs to be tested to show a presumptive positive test so that the case can be charged and the defendant held to answer in court. That is the way it used to be. People that live in the past and have a hard time grasping that times have changed are still holding true to the past. This inability to change with the times, though, has put many officers at risk of fentanyl exposure. On my Facebook page, I asked officers for the problems and excuses they've heard from administrators about stopping the field testing of drugs.

Officers in progressive departments that are concerned about their officers have already stopped field-testing drugs. In some jurisdictions, public defenders are now asking for "no time waivers" knowing that a field test wasn't done and that the agency will have to accelerate the process of testing the drug sample in a lab. This is the main reason agencies are continuing to field test drugs. The field-testing is expected by judges and district attorneys before a case is moved forward through the judicial system. The dangerous thinking of police administrators and DA's that can't change with the times is also held by some officers. One officer wrote, "There is not a reason to stop...just wear pro-

TECTIVE ITEMS...IF AN OFFICER IS SO PARANOID OF FIELD TESTING HOW DOES HE/SHE CONDUCT A SEARCH OF ANYTHING??? SHALL WE JUST STOP DOING POLICE WORK TOO???" No one is asking officers to stop doing their job. We are merely asking them to be smarter about how they do it. Protective clothing is one step and a step I have written about and taught about frequently. You should continue to do your job, but you should be doing it with the proper protective equipment and all testing should be done in a lab.

Courtesy of Keith Graves.
<https://gravesassociates.com/>



Package for Safety First Chain of Custody Second

-Due to increasing safety risks associated with drugs, including fentanyl and its analogues, most labs are now requesting that all narcotic evidence be safely packaged in the following manner. (See graphic 1-1)

- All narcotics must be packaged in a Ziploc or heat sealed plastic bag, of appropriate size, *unless plant material. Plant material will mold in plastic.*
- All primary evidence packaging (Baggie, bindle, paper, Ziploc) must be contained in at least one additional (Sealed) plastic bag. Evidence is then sealed in an envelope.
- In addition to the primary package, evidence suspected to be fentanyl (or a similar toxic substance) must be contained in at least two plastic bags.
- All large cases of 400 grams or more, including kilos, must be in plastic Ziplocs or heat seal bags prior to placement in boxes or paper bags.
- If fentanyl or a similar toxic substance is suspected, it must be noted on the lab request form (Or like process) and documented on the evidence whenever possible.



Example of a heat sealer device which safely locks the contents of the plastic bag inside.

How To Overcome Old School Thinking

It is a struggle to get people to accept that we shouldn't be field testing drugs anymore. It will take a meeting between all of the chiefs in your county and the Sheriff, the district attorney and the presiding judge (the judge that supervises the other judges) to meet and talk about the threat to the officers on the street. I would suggest setting up a "task force" of experts to advise this panel on the best way of dealing with the fentanyl threat.

Before your talk with the group above, it will be important to contact your crime lab, as well

as other crime labs in your state, to see how many fentanyl submissions have come into the lab. It's also important to have these criminalists come on board and talk about the types of fentanyl submissions they are encountering. I sit on a panel of experts for California POST where we are trying to advise officers on how to handle the fentanyl threat. One criminalist manager showed examples of fentanyl that looked like tar heroin (a very common form of heroin in California) that tested positive for fentanyl. there was no heroin in the sample at

all. A DEA chemist talked about the carfentanil processing mills he has processed. The problem in my geographical area was much worse than I had expected.

Also talk to narcotics units in your area. As an example, a central valley drug task force called me stating they had purchased 4 kilos of fentanyl from Mexican drug cartels. They wanted to know what they should do for officers in their county to protect themselves. I asked them to look at their overdose statistics for the past few months compared to last year.

"One criminalist manager showed examples of fentanyl that looked like tar heroin (a very common form of heroin in California) that tested positive for fentanyl. there was no heroin in the sample at all."

A Field Testing Alternative

Several companies have come out with portable spectrometers that can detect the presence of drugs without the officer handling drugs. These are great alternatives to old school field testing. However, these spectrometers are very expensive.

One solution would be to buy one for officers that is kept in the evidence processing room (the bag and tag room) and one for narcotics detectives. Money can come from asset seizure funds.

It will not be an easy task to

change your procedures. However, if you invite all of the stakeholders to the table to explain the threat and do your research ahead of time, no one can agree to put officers at risk. Times have changed and we need to change with them.



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Thank you to our “Friends of CAPE” resource staff.....

-I think we all know that knowledge is key to how we do our job and even more importantly to stay safe in our work environment. CAPE plays a huge role in ensuring that we as “evidence professionals” spread the word and stay educated on trending topics. Equally important are the resources that we call “Friends of CAPE.” From training instructors, specialty vendors and our fellow co-workers at our agencies, we are all grateful for the amazing information sharing and relationships we have here at CAPE.

“Friends of C.A.P.E.”

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Jennifer is the Assistant Director at the Orange County Crime Laboratory overseeing the Forensic Chemistry Bureau. She has been a forensic toxicologist for 15 years with the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department and presents for numerous professional organizations at local, state, and national level. Jennifer is the current president of the California Association of Toxicologists, has testified in front of both the California State Senate and Assembly Public Safety Committees, and has been an expert witness in more than 200 criminal and administrative hearings.

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We thank Mr. Graves for his expert opinion regarding the efforts to terminate field-testing and alternative drug identification. Keith Graves has been a Police Officer in the San Francisco Bay Area since 1990 and his last assignment was supervising for the Special Operations Unit (a unit tasked with narcotic, vice and gang investigations). Keith is a Drug Recognition Expert Instructor (IACP #3292) and teaches both the DRE course and the CNOA Drug Abuse Recognition Course. Keith has also taught at the Basic Police Academy and has developed a number of drug courses for the California Narcotics Officers Association. Keith has held assignments as a Narcotics/Vice Detective, Training Sergeant, Patrol Sergeant, COPPS Officer, Traffic Officer, and SWAT Team Leader. He is the 2016 California Narcotics Officer of the year and a prior Mothers Against Drunk Driving Officer of the Year. Keith has taught thousands of officers and businesses around the world about drug use, drug trends, compliance training and drug investigations. Keith earned a BA in Business Management from Saint Mary's College of California. Keith is the Founder and President of Graves & Associates, a company dedicated to providing drug training to law enforcement and private industry.