



DEA Targets

A REAL
THREAT
TO LAW
ENFORCEMENT

fentanyl

Officer Safety Alert

- Fentanyl is a dangerous, powerful, Schedule II narcotic responsible for an epidemic of overdose deaths within the U.S. and is the basis for this law enforcement safety alert.
- Fentanyl is up to 50 times more potent than heroin. It's extremely dangerous to anyone who may come into contact with it.
- Although fentanyl, a synthetic opiate painkiller, is legitimately used by doctors to treat patients with severe pain, the synthetic drug is now flooding the streets as a more potent and deadly alternative to heroin and prescription painkillers.
- Fentanyl is often mixed with heroin to increase potency, but dealers and buyers may not know exactly what they are selling or ingesting. Many users underestimate the potency of fentanyl, significantly raising the risk of overdose.



Risks to Law Enforcement

- Fentanyl is not only dangerous for the drug's users, but for law enforcement, public health workers, and first responders who unknowingly come into contact with it in its different forms. Fentanyl can be absorbed through the skin or accidental inhalation of airborne powder. DEA is concerned about law enforcement coming into contact with fentanyl on the streets during the course of narcotics work.
- If you ingest fentanyl, symptoms include: drowsiness, disorientation, sedation, respiratory distress, pin-point pupils and clammy skin. The onset of these symptoms is dramatic and usually occurs within a few minutes.
- Canine units are particularly at risk of immediate death from inhaling fentanyl during their work.



Just 2 milligrams of fentanyl can cause death in most people but this varies greatly. Fentanyl and its analogs come in several forms including powder, blotter paper, tablets, and spray.

What To Do If Exposed

- In August 2015, law enforcement officers in New Jersey doing a narcotics field test on a substance that turned out to be a mix of heroin, cocaine, and fentanyl, were exposed to the mixture. They experienced dizziness, shortness of breath, and respiratory problems. Immediate medical treatment saved their lives.
- If inhaled, move the victim to fresh air. If ingested, wash out the victim's mouth with water provided the person is conscious. Seek IMMEDIATE medical attention.
- Narcan (also referred to as Naloxone), an overdose-reversing drug, is an antidote for opiate overdose. Immediately administering Narcan can reverse an accidental overdose of fentanyl. Continue to administer multiple doses of Narcan until the exposed person or overdose victim responds favorably.



Field Testing / Safety Precautions

- Unfortunately, fentanyl and its compounds resemble powdered cocaine or heroin. If the presence of fentanyl is suspected, do not take samples. Taking samples or opening a package could stir up the powder. Instead, if you suspect an exhibit contains fentanyl, label it appropriately, and send it directly to the laboratory for analysis, clearly indicating on the submission paperwork that the item is suspected of containing fentanyl. This will alert laboratory personnel to take the necessary safety precautions.
- Fentanyl can also be mixed with other substances which can alter its appearance. Remember, fentanyl may be smuggled, transported, and/or used as part of a drug mixture.



Current Fentanyl Outbreak

- The current outbreak involves not just fentanyl, but also fentanyl compounds. The outbreak encompasses virtually the entire U.S. resulting in thousands of deaths and involves a wide array of individuals, including new and experienced abusers.
- In the last three years, DEA has seen a significant resurgence in fentanyl-related seizures. In addition, DEA has identified at least 15 other deadly, fentanyl-related compounds. Some fentanyl cases have been significant, particularly in the northeast and in California, including one 12 kilogram seizure. In May 2016, a traffic stop in Atlanta, GA area resulted in the seizure of 40 kilograms of fentanyl – initially believed to be bricks of cocaine – wrapped into blocks hidden in buckets and immersed in a thick fluid. The fentanyl from these seizures originated from Mexican drug trafficking organizations.
- Recent seizures of counterfeit hydrocodone or oxycodone tablets have also revealed the presence of fentanyl. These fentanyl tablets are marked to mimic the authentic narcotic prescription medications and have led to multiple overdoses and deaths.

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