



PRESS RELEASE

Marion County Prosecutor's Office &
the Indiana Attorney General's Office



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Curry, Zoeller join forces to put retailers on notice about sale of illegal synthetic drugs

INDIANAPOLIS – Indiana retailers can expect a formal notice and warning from state and local officials that continued synthetic drug sales could cost them their business.

Marion County Prosecutor Terry Curry and Indiana Attorney General Greg Zoeller teamed up today to launch initiatives aimed at getting synthetic drugs like “bath salts” and “spice” off retailers’ shelves. According to a new state law, retail merchants – like smoke shops and convenience stores – caught selling the drugs will face penalties including the loss of their retail merchant certificate of business for one year.

“In joining forces with the Indiana Attorney General, we are sending a message that we will not tolerate the distribution of such obviously dangerous drugs in our community,” Curry said. “We are determined to put an end to the sale of synthetic drugs, and we will pursue all available remedies at our disposal including criminal prosecution.”

Curry said the Marion County Prosecutor’s Office is coordinating with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department to hand-deliver a warning letter to central Indiana retailers to put them on notice that his office will aggressively prosecute any person or business involved in the sale of these dangerous substances. Even if the chemical composition of such items does not match the current statutory definition of synthetic drugs, Curry will still pursue prosecution under laws that prohibit dealing in a substance represented to be a controlled substance or dealing in a look-a-like substance.

Synthetic drugs are made to mirror the highs associated with marijuana or cocaine, but sold openly under the guise of “plant food,” “bath salts,” “potpourri,” “incense” or “spice.” While the packaging is labeled not for human consumption the products are often taken orally, inhaled or injected. These drugs can cause dangerously high body temperatures, racing heart rates, high blood pressure, and permanent organ damage, and the psychotic effect of these substances can last for several days.

“This collaborative effort between state and local officials is intended to send a strong message to businesses who continue to sell synthetic drugs despite the law and the risks to the public,” Zoeller said. “Law enforcement and health officials agree that the danger of having these drugs in the open marketplace and available to the public is significant. It is our responsibility to use the resources available to prevent these unregulated and illegal drugs from being available on the shelves at the corner store.”

The Indiana Attorney General's Office, Indiana State Police, Indiana State Department of Health, Indiana Department of Revenue, Indiana Board of Pharmacy and Indiana Sheriffs Association have also joined forces on the state level to issue a legal notice to all Indiana retailers.

Zoeller said this statewide notice details the penalties and consequences for legal violations in relation to synthetic drug production and distribution. The document also emphasizes that retailers' reliance on packaging representations, supplier representations and lab reports are done at their own risk.

The Attorney General's Office is also asking retailers to sign a "Synthetic Drug Community Protection Agreement" to stop selling the illegal products and relinquish related inventory to the Drug Enforcement Administration. If the agreement is violated, the document will be used to establish the owner's knowledge of and intent to violate applicable Indiana and federal law.

State legislators added bath salts and more than 60 other substances this year to the list of banned synthetic drugs. Zoeller said criminals alter the chemical make-up of the drugs to include substances not on the list to skirt the law. To help combat this problem the Indiana Board of Pharmacy now has rulemaking authority to add any substances that have been listed by other states or the federal government.

In June, Zoeller hosted an inter-state summit in Evansville to tackle the growing threat of synthetic drugs and small-batch methamphetamine production. Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan, law enforcement authorities, public health experts and prosecutors' offices from both states participated in the meeting. Zoeller said this statewide initiative was developed during that meeting and he plans to continue building partnerships with other prosecutors' offices and law enforcement groups across the state.