



Department of Health
Agency of Human Services



“Bath Salts,” Salvia Divinorum and Five Synthetic Cannabinoids Become Illegal in Vermont

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BURLINGTON – The Vermont Department of Health has banned the use, sale, possession or manufacture of many of the new designer drugs labeled “not for human consumption.” These drugs have been sold in head shops and over the Internet to get around regulations and laws in Vermont.

“Bath salts,” Salvia divinorum, and five synthetic cannabinoids are now illegal in Vermont with an amendment to the **Regulated Drugs Rule** effective today (Dec. 16, 2011).

The use of so-called “Bath salts” has spiked regionally and nationally. The Northern New England Poison Center has recorded nearly 200 cases (147 in Maine, 35 in New Hampshire and 11 in Vermont) as of November 2011. This represents only a small fraction of the overall abuse. Nationally, reported cases have increased from 303 in 2010 to 4,720 in 2011.

“These substances serve no useful purpose and have the potential to cause extensive harm to individuals and whole communities,” said Health Commissioner Harry Chen, MD.

“Bath salts” (which are not similar to household bath salts) have been marketed under various other names such as “Ivory Wave,” “Purple Wave,” “Vanilla Sky” or “Bliss.” Complications for people who abuse the drug include high temperatures, seizure, muscle breakdown, kidney failure, heart rhythm disturbances and death, according to the Northern New England Poison Center.

Immediate medical attention is needed to prevent over-stimulation and behavioral complications.

Criminalizing these drugs will protect Vermonters and prevent potential problems in the future, according to Public Safety Commissioner Keith Flynn.

“We don’t have a serious problem with it right now, but the best strategy is to get out in front of this before it has a chance to gain a foothold here in Vermont,” Commissioner Flynn said.

Gov. Peter Shumlin announced at a press conference on Aug. 4 with Commissioners Chen and Flynn that an emergency rule was placed on “bath salts” to prevent it from spreading in the community until the Health Department could amend the Regulated Drug Rule. The Health Department submitted the emergency rule – after the approval of the Boards of Health, Pharmacy, and Medical Practice – to the Secretary of State’s office on Aug. 3 to go into effect until a permanent ban was approved.

The penalty for possessing a single dose of one of these hallucinogenic illegal banned drugs is one year in prison and a fine not more than \$2,000. The penalty for selling an illegal hallucinogenic drug is up to three years in prison and a fine of \$25,000. For possession or selling 1,000 doses or more the penalty is up to 15 years in prison and a fine of up to \$500,000.

Salvia divinorum, a plant in the mint family that has hallucinogenic properties, was included in the list of banned substances in the amended drug rule. When dried and ground up, the plant may appear similar to oregano or marijuana and can be chewed, drunk or smoked. According to the U. S. Drug Enforcement Administration, 24 states had enacted legislation that place regulatory controls on Salvia divinorum as of September 2010. Five synthetic cannabinoids, including the drug commonly known as "K2" or "Spice," are also now illegal to use, possess or sell as part of the amendment.

A copy of the amended **Regulated Drug Rule** is available at healthvermont.gov.

For further questions about bath salts or Salvia, please contact the Northern New England Poison Center: 1-800-222-1222.

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