



Drug Alert Watch

Salvia Divinorum

U . S . D E P A R T M E N T O F J U S T I C E

EWS Report 000001

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Several SENTRY users in the Midwest have reported the emergence (or resurgence) of Salvia divinorum (Salvia) abuse in their areas through the SENTRY system. A number of these and other users were unfamiliar with Salvia and requested additional information through a SENTRY Watch.



Salvia is a naturally occurring hallucinogenic herb with effects similar to those of LSD. It is a perennial, a member of the mint family, and resembles sage. The plant has large green leaves, hollow square stems, and white flowers with purple calyces. It typically grows in large clusters; some Salvia plants grow to more than 3 feet in height. Native to the Sierra Mazateca region of Oaxaca, Mexico, Salvia is traditionally used by the Mazatec Indians in spiritual practices, healing ceremonies, and to induce visions. Salvia is grown domestically, primarily in hot, humid areas, and propagates easily. It also is imported from Mexico and Central and South America. Street names include diviner's sage, magic mint, and Sally D.

The active ingredient of Salvia, Salvinorin A, is one of the most potent naturally occurring psychoactives – it is effective orally at 200-500 micrograms. Psychoactive effects include visual and auditory hallucinations; psychedelic sensations including perceptions of bright lights, vivid colors and shapes; loss of physical coordination; dizziness; slurred speech; chills; nausea; decreased heart rate; uncontrolled laughter; visions; and a sense of flying or floating.

Salvia is inexpensive and easy to obtain as seeds, whole plants, plant cuttings, fresh and dried leaves, or in liquid extract form. Abusers typically obtain Salvia over the Internet and from local head shops and

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tobacco shops. The most common method of ingestion employed by abusers is smoking dried leaves in a joint, from a bong, or in a pipe. Salvia can also be chewed, imbibed in a drink, or inhaled. Effects from smoking occur within 30 seconds and last approximately 30 minutes. When chewed, the onset of effects typically appears within 5 to 10 minutes. According to a February 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health Report published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) – the latest information available – about 1.8 million individuals aged 12 or older used Salvia in their lifetime; approximately 750,000 did so during 2006. Use was more common among young adults (18 to 25 years old) as opposed to older adults (>26 years of age). Young adults were three times more likely than youths aged 12 to 17 to have used Salvia. Use is more common in males than females.

Salvia is not regulated by the federal government or listed under the Controlled Substances Act (CSA). However, 37 states have introduced legislation that would control the drug to some degree – neither Salvia nor its active ingredient Salvinorin A, has an approved medical use in the United States. The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) regards Salvia as a ‘drug of concern’ because of its wide availability, potential for abuse, and hallucinogenic effects. As such, DEA is monitoring reports of abuse and assessing whether Salvia should be scheduled under the CSA.

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POC: SENTRY Management Team, www.justice.gov/ndic/sentry or (814) 532-5888