



Drug Alert Watch

Mephedrone

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

EWS Report 000004

April 27, 2010

A SENTRY subscriber in North Dakota reported that since the beginning of 2010, several individuals in the Bismarck area ingested or injected illicit products containing mephedrone¹ and required hospitalization. In addition, the Oregon State Police Forensic Laboratory (Bend, Oregon) received two submissions of white powder that users referred to as “sunshine.” Originally suspected as 3,4-methylenedioxymethcathinone (MDMCat), both submissions tested as mephedrone.



Mephedrone is a synthetic, psychoactive stimulant. It reportedly is being sold as an alternative to ecstasy, cocaine, and amphetamine. Street names include meow meow, Miaow, and M-Cat. Mephedrone is most commonly sold as a fine, white, off-white, or yellowish powder, in crystal form, as a pill, or in capsules containing the powder. It typically has little or no odor. Abusers ingest mephedrone by swallowing the drug or snorting it like cocaine (inhalation). Some abusers also smoke the drug and, in rare cases, inject it. Swallowing reportedly produces a longer, less intense experience, while snorting results in a shorter, more intense effect – snorting increases the potential for addiction. Some abusers also mix mephedrone with other cathinones and caffeine.

Mephedrone abuse is relatively new in the United States and in many other areas of the world. As such, peer-reviewed, reliable information on short- and long-term effects of the drug is limited, and little research is available on its effects, pharmacology, and toxicity. Users report effects that are similar, but not identical, to MDMA², including euphoria, alertness, talkativeness, anxiety, and paranoia; some users feel greater empathy with those around them. Adverse effects include overstimulation of the heart, circulatory system, and nervous system. Additionally, inhalation of the drug can result in severe nose bleeds and nose burns. Other effects include hallucinations, grinding of teeth, rashes, delusions, sweating, and uncomfortable changes in body temperature. Changes in body temperature caused by mephedrone may account for reports by some abusers of blue or cold fingers.

¹ Also known as 4-methylmethcathinone (4-MMC), 4-methylephedrone, or MMCAT

² 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as ecstasy

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While current levels of mephedrone use appear to be limited, reports of the drug's abuse are becoming more widespread in the United States as well as in Australia, Canada, and Europe. Mephedrone is not currently scheduled under the U. S. Controlled Substances Act; however, the North Dakota Board of Pharmacy recently filed an emergency rule with the North Dakota Legislative Council seeking to make mephedrone a Schedule I controlled substance under the state's Uniform Controlled Substances Act. Mephedrone is designated as a scheduled substance in Australia, Canada, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Israel, Norway, and Sweden; the drug was designated a scheduled class B illegal substance in the United Kingdom on April 16, 2010.

Products containing mephedrone often are sold via Internet sites as herbal bath salts, plant food, or research chemicals – such products are usually designated as “not sold for human consumption.” No prevalence or demographic studies of mephedrone abuse have yet been conducted in the United States; however, the United Kingdom's Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs found that mephedrone users tend to be younger than cocaine and ecstasy users and often are in their teens and twenties.

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Photo Credit: Oregon State Police Forensic Laboratory (Bend, Oregon)

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