

Important Warning from the US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA): Keeping Staff and Bystanders Safe

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On September 22, 2016 the DEA issued a national alert to law enforcement and to the general public about a new synthetic opioid that is 10,000 times more potent than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl.

Carfentanil can be absorbed through the skin or accidentally inhaled, and even a very small amount can be fatal. Below are highlights of DEA recommendations for anyone who suspects they may have encountered carfentanil:

- Exercise extreme caution. It should only be handled by properly trained and outfitted law enforcement professionals.
- Field testing of substances found at the scene of an overdose is NOT advised. Transport it directly to a laboratory, where it can be safely handled and tested, and beware of the potential harm to police canines.
- Onset of symptoms occurs within minutes of exposure; including respiratory depression or arrest, drowsiness, disorientation, sedation, pinpoint pupils, and clammy skin.
- Call (EMS) immediately if exposure is suspected. If inhaled, move victim to fresh air. If ingested and victim is conscious, wash out the victim's eyes and mouth with cool water.
- Administer naloxone to reverse an overdose of carfentanil, fentanyl, or other opioids. Multiple doses of naloxone may be required (it took five doses to revive a man in Maine). Continue to administer a dose of naloxone every 2 to 3 minutes until the individual breathes on his/her own for at least 15 minutes or until the EMS arrives.

Carfentanil was identified in June by law enforcement in Vancouver, British Columbia. Since that time local law enforcement has made seizures or encountered carfentanil overdoses in Ohio, Kentucky, Michigan, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Maine, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Florida, Indiana and New Jersey, along with other local first responders.

- Correctional staffs should be aware carfentanil involvement cannot be ruled out in cases of overdose occurring in jails or prisons and take recommended precaution.
- Probation, parole and especially field officers that enter the homes of individuals under supervisions must be aware of these risks.
- Staff responsible for addiction treatment programming and pre-release planning should communicate the risks to appropriate individuals approaching release.

Link to full DEA Alert: <https://www.dea.gov/divisions/hq/2016/hq092216.shtml>

Link to printable DEA advisory: https://www.dea.gov/divisions/hq/2016/hq092216_attach.pdf

Link to CDC Health Advisory (#CDCHAN-00384): <http://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00384.asp>

CDC Health Update (#CDCHAN-00395): <http://emergency.cdc.gov/han/han00395.asp>

DEA Fentanyl Warning Roll Call Video:

https://www.dea.gov/video_clips/Fentanyl%20Roll%20Call%20Video.mp4