

Dear Chief:

Is Alamosa experiencing any issues with the drug SPICE, or what is otherwise referred to as Synthetic Marijuana?

YES; in fact APD has confirmed that possession, use, and illegal sales are occurring in our community.

Below is some background recently released by the Colorado Department of Human Services; we encourage all of our community members to learn more about the drug and help us proactively address this latest drug challenge.

Synthetic Marijuana in Colorado Background

This fall, the health department learned about an unusually large increase in emergency department (ED) visits related to synthetic marijuana use across the Denver metro area and Colorado Springs. 263 ED visits were reported between Aug. 21st and Sept. 19th. Some were hospitalized or put in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Three deaths are being investigated as potentially linked.

Among patients in the initial chart review, the age range is 12-70 years old. 37 percent of reported patients are 20-29 years old; 24 percent are 12-19 years old; and 75 percent of the patients are male.

What is synthetic marijuana?

Synthetic marijuana is a mixture of dried herbs and spices sprayed with chemicals that, when smoked, create a high similar to THC, the main active ingredient in marijuana. “Spice” and “K2” are two popular names for these products.

How is it packaged and sold?

Synthetic marijuana is usually sold as dried leaves in a small bag. It is often labeled as incense, potpourri, or herbal smoking blend. It is sold in gas stations and convenience stores, under a variety of brand names including K2, Spice, Funky Monkey, Sexy Monkey, Dead Man Walking, Ten-X, Twilight, and Scooby Snax. Package labeling often warns consumers that it is not for human consumption.

Why do people smoke synthetic marijuana?

The drug is smoked to get high. It can't be detected by the standard urine drug tests. Since it was first sold legally at gas stations and convenience stores, it may be thought of as a legal or “safe” high.

What are the side effects?

Side effects may include elevated heart rates and blood pressure, drowsiness, agitation, hallucinations, seizures, tremors (shaking), vomiting, paranoia, loss of physical control, and comas.

Who is most likely to use synthetic marijuana?

Most cases are among males, teens or young adults.

As community members, you can be a part of the solution and we are asking for your help:

1. Be aware of the signs and symptoms of those who may be under the influence or overdosing on SPICE and seek medical treatment when you observe signs of use/abuse.
2. Report information concerning SPICE to local law enforcement and help to identify and hold accountable those who are selling and distributing the drug locally.
3. Talk to children and family members about the risks associated with using Spice.

Craig Dodd, Chief of Police