



**San Diego County
Sheriff**

Training Bulletin

**William D. Gore,
Sheriff**

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LETHAL FENTANYL & CARFENTANIL EXPOSURE

Warning

There is a significant threat to law enforcement personnel and other first responders, who may come in contact with fentanyl and other fentanyl-related substances through routine law enforcement, emergency or life-saving activities. Fentanyl and related substances are designed to be absorbed into the body by several means, including injection, oral ingestion, nose or mouth inhalation, or absorbed through the skin or eyes. Any substance suspected to contain fentanyl should be treated with extreme caution; exposure to a small amount can lead to significant health-related complications, such as respiratory failure, or death.

What is Fentanyl and Carfentanil?

Pharmaceutical grade fentanyl was originally developed legally to provide opioid pain management. Since then, synthetic fentanyl being smuggled in from Mexico and China has been used to create counterfeit pharmaceutical tablets such as oxycodone. Synthetic Fentanyl is also being used as replacement for heroin. Fentanyl is 80-100 times stronger than morphine and many times that of heroin. It would only take two to three milligrams of fentanyl (equivalent to five to seven grains of table salt) to induce respiratory failure and possibly death (see photograph below).

Carfentanil is a fentanyl related compound commonly used as a tranquilizing agent for elephants and other large mammals. Carfentanil is 100 times more potent than fentanyl, the high potency and high profit margins of illicit produced fentanyl products are causing the alarming and growing overdose rate.

Fentanyl-related substances have been identified in:

- Powder (often resembling heroin & cocaine)
- Pill
- Capsule
- Liquid
- Blotter paper

***Two milligrams of fentanyl; LETHAL dose for most people.**



Handling Recommendations

Due to the hazardous nature of fentanyl and fentanyl related substances, the United States Drug Enforcement Administration recommends law enforcement personnel who encounter any white powdery substance should NOT open the packaging to process for testing. To reduce the potential for accidental exposure, handle all items suspected of being contaminated with fentanyl with extreme caution.

- **Double glove using nitrile disposable gloves**
- **Utilize the N-95 dust mask**
- **When handling narcotics (evidence and even mail) that may contain fentanyl or a white powdery substance, have a partner with you who can respond in case of exposure.**
- **When processing evidence and reviewing inmate mail, have a Naloxone/Narcan kit readily available (Naloxone is an antidote for opioid overdose and is available throughout your facility).**



Powdered Fentanyl

If a white powdery substance is found, the San Diego Sheriff's Department Regional Crime Laboratory recommends the following:

- **Do not open the packaging containing the substance**
- **Seal the packaging and substance in two K-Pak evidence bags**
- **Place a label on the packaging stating "POSSIBLE FENTANYL" and send to the lab for testing.**

Updated Field Testing

- See Training Bulletin – Updated Field Testing Procedures / August 2019

Recent Trends - Photo of Counterfeit Hydrocodone Pill

Recently, local law enforcement have been encountering the counterfeit Hydrocodone Blue M30 - AKA "Blues" pills. These pills typically contain fentanyl. These pills have been testing positive for Acetaminophen with the TruNarc device indicating they are counterfeit. The real pills contain no acetaminophen. **CAUTION should be taken when these pills are encountered in the field.**



Fentanyl Overdose Symptoms

The onset of the symptoms usually occurs within minutes.

- Drowsiness
- Disorientation
- Pinpoint pupils
- Skin rash
- Clammy skin
- Respiratory failure

Exposure Procedures

- If a substance has been inhaled, seek immediate medical attention. Remove the exposed deputy from the contaminated area (preferably to a location with fresh air).
- If a substance has been ingested through the mouth or eyes and the individual is conscious, rinse eyes and mouth with cool water.
- If there has been skin contact, wash the exposed area immediately with soap and water. (**Be aware hand sanitizer containing alcohol increases the absorption rate of fentanyl through the skin).**)
- **If a deputy or professional staff is exposed and exhibits overdose symptoms, immediately administer Naloxone/Narcan. Depending on the drug's purity and potency, multiple doses of Naloxone/Narcan may be required.**



View the video clip of two New Jersey Officer's experience after being exposed to fentanyl.
https://www.dea.gov/video_clips/DEA%20Fentanyl%20Video.m4v

The information in this Training Bulletin was provided by the Sheriff's Special Investigation Division. If you have any information or expertise in a specific area and would like to write a training bulletin, please contact Corporal Brent Longfellow at the L.E. In-Service Training Unit via e-mail at [REDACTED].