



**AMERICAN SOCIETY OF
CRIME LABORATORY DIRECTORS, INC.**

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Drug Threat is ‘Unprecedented’ According to Forensic Experts

NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors (ASCLD) is issuing an urgent public alert regarding the dangers posed by drugs currently circulating America's streets and neighborhoods as a result of the current opioid crisis. This alert is intended to help the public recognize and avoid suspicious materials when they are nearby.

"The threat is unprecedented," warns ASCLD President Ray Wickenheiser. "Some of the clandestine substances being sold or made accessible have formulations that are so toxic that it's better to consider them poison."

The street drugs the public may be exposed to can be so dangerous that even trace amounts can be fatal when ingested, inhaled or even absorbed through the skin. Carfentanil, a drug 100 times more lethal than heroin and 10,000 times more lethal than morphine, is a drug used to tranquilize elephants, yet is now available on the streets. A lethal dose is approximately 20 micrograms, which is about the size of a grain of salt. The problem is so serious that it requires scientists working in crime laboratories across the United States to take additional special precautions to protect their own safety.

According to Wickenheiser, approximately 94% of all crime laboratories in the United States compile and share data pertaining to drug evidence submissions. "Crime laboratories see and identify a variety of drugs, compiling statistics from across many law enforcement agencies. There is a direct relationship between the kinds of drugs we are seeing in our laboratories and the spike in overdose deaths being reported in hospitals across the country."

ASCLD warns members of the public to pay close attention in order to recognize and avoid dangerous drug paraphernalia. Drugs seen in America's crime laboratories are often packaged, transported, and used with common household items.

American Society of Crime Laboratory Directors
DRUG THREAT IS 'UNPRECEDENTED' ACCORDING TO FORENSIC EXPERTS
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Items to be avoided include:

- Pills, tablets, or unidentified candy
- Powders, especially those that are white or gray in color
- Glassine (wax paper) packets, small knotted plastic bag corners or ziplock bags
- Clear capsules that contain powder
- Rubber balloons or condoms
- Small, brightly colored packages
- Syringes or spoons
- Stickers or labels that seem out of place (potent drugs may be on the adhesive side)

The following crime lab data underscore the nature and severity of the problem:

- In the first six months of 2017, there was a 19% increase in opioid submissions to crime labs as compared to all of 2016
- In 2016, there were over 22 different types of fentanyl (a powerful opioid pain medication) identified in crime labs
- 2017 has seen a 54% increase in fentanyl cases submitted to crime labs
- Between 2012 and 2016, laboratories have witnessed a 6000% increase in fentanyl cases. This increase corresponds directly with the overdose deaths being seen nationwide.
- Case backlogs have increased by roughly 28% in the last year due to the increasing case submissions, case complexity and danger of the drugs now being seized by law enforcement

Forensic scientists working in America's crime laboratories have seen first-hand, the kinds of materials and containers that may pose the greatest threat. This public alert is based on their direct experience observing and analyzing these dangerous drugs.

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