

Maryland enacts tough criminal ban on synthetic marijuana products

Written by Australian Business

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Article provided by Law Offices of James N. Papirmeister, Esq. Visit us at <http://www.criminal-firm.com>

Most Americans have heard about inexpensive products sold in retail establishments and online known as "synthetic marijuana" or "synthetic cannabinoids." They are, however, marketed as potpourri, bath salts or incense, which are smoked or ingested to get a high similar to that of marijuana. In reality, these compounds are not marijuana, but rather a class of chemicals sprayed on dried plant material that can be extremely dangerous to users.

On Oct. 1, 2013, a new state law in Maryland -- passed unanimously in the legislature -- took effect that adds these compounds to the list of illegal drugs classified as "Schedule I," the most dangerous. Other states and the federal government have had trouble outlawing these drugs because when their laws specifically identify the chemical compounds that are illegal, the manufacturers respond quickly by changing their formulas slightly to avoid the unlawful classification.

The Maryland law, however, is stronger and more flexible because it outlaws a broader family of drugs that act a certain way in the brain to the way marijuana does, rather than banning specific chemical compounds. Collectively, the drugs are called "cannabimimetic agents" in the law. Anyone who uses, possesses, sells or distributes these agents in Maryland may be subject to very serious criminal penalties.

The products are often sold in colorful, youthful packaging. Some of the more well known names this product goes by: -K-2.-Spice.-Voodoo Spice.-Scooby Snax.-Mr. Nice Guy.-Mystery.-Mr. Smiley.-Blaze.-Crazy Clown.-And more.

Mostly manufactured in Asia, these drugs are especially dangerous because there is no way to really know which chemicals or how much of them lace the plant materials. Much more potent than marijuana, they have been reported to cause a variety of symptoms, including panic attacks, psychosis, trouble breathing, aggression, hallucinations, seizures, vomiting, numbness, palpitations, heart problems, high blood pressure, coma and more. Death can result from the compound's affect on the body, subsequent motor vehicle accidents or suicide.

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The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that synthetic marijuana is the second-most used illegal drug by high-school seniors -- especially boys -- behind true marijuana.

Seek legal representation early

Penalties for a conviction under the new ban are steep and include:-Up to four years imprisonment, a fine of \$25,000, or both for use or possession, a misdemeanor.-Up to 20 years imprisonment, a fine of up to \$25,000, or both for distribution, a felony.-Progressively steeper fines and prison terms for subsequent offenses, including mandatory minimum prison sentences not eligible for suspension or parole.-And more.

Maryland officials in the news have said the state plans to intensely enforce the new law. Any business owner or any individual under investigation for, arrested for or charged with a crime related to synthetic marijuana in the state should immediately seek the help of an experienced Maryland criminal defense lawyer, preferably before making any statement to authorities. The downside is too great: potentially decades in prison and thousands in fines, depending on the situation.

The suspect's attorney can conduct an independent investigation of the circumstances with an eye toward protection of the defendant's legal rights, preservation of important evidence and potential defenses. A seasoned criminal defense lawyer can also explore whether to negotiate a plea deal with the prosecution, including the possibility of drug court for a defendant with an addiction. If necessary, skilled legal counsel can fight for the accused at trial or advocate for fair sentencing.