

(U) Deadly Contaminated Cocaine Widespread in Florida



DEA
BULLETIN



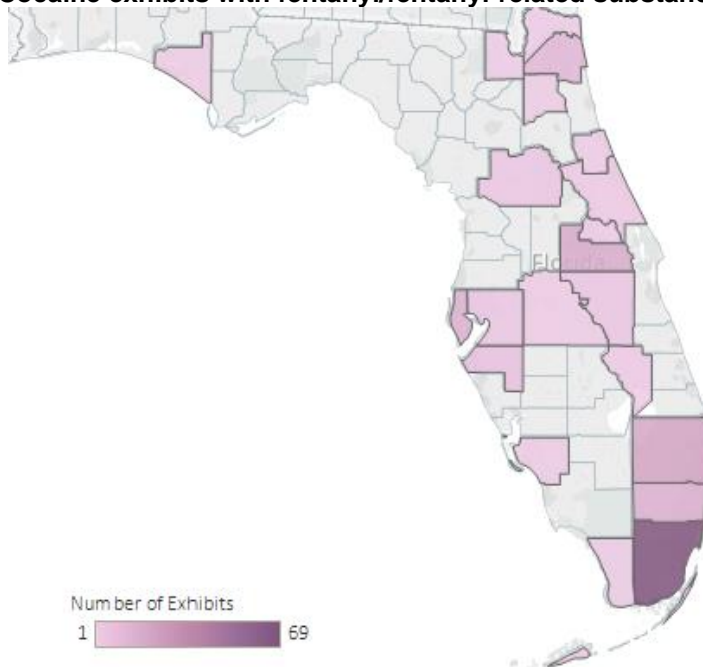
(U) This DEA Bulletin is based on preliminary reporting and may be subject to updating as additional information becomes available.

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(U) Seized cocaine containing fentanyl, carfentanil

(U) A review of cocaine exhibits acquired by law enforcement authorities during operations across Florida and analyzed by forensic laboratories during the period from 2016 to 2017 revealed the widespread adulteration of cocaine with fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances. Fentanyl, a Schedule II opioid analgesic approximately 50 times more potent than heroin and 100 times more potent than morphine, carries a high risk of overdose and can be lethal at the 2-milligram range. Forensic chemists discovered fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances including acetyl fentanyl, carfentanil, Furanylfentanyl, and p-fluoroisobutyryl fentanyl in over 180 cocaine exhibits. Carfentanil, a synthetic opioid that is approximately 10,000 times more potent than morphine, was the most prevalent of the fentanyl-related substances found in Florida's cocaine seizures.

(U) Figure 1: Cocaine exhibits with fentanyl/fentanyl-related substances, 2016-2017.



Source: National Forensic Laboratory Information System.



(U) The widespread seizures of contaminated cocaine indicate that drug dealers are commonly mixing fentanyl and fentanyl-related substances into the drug (cocaine). In some cases, this is done purposefully to increase the drug's potency or profitability (and customer base). In other cases, fentanyl is inadvertently mixed into cocaine by drug dealers using the same blending equipment to cut various types of drugs, such as heroin. Regardless, the adulteration often occurs without the users' awareness, which may lead to potential addiction and overdose incidents. Individuals who use cocaine occasionally are at an extremely high risk of overdose due to lack of experience and tolerance.

(U) Drug Combinations Driving Cocaine Deaths

(U) Over the past four years, cocaine-related fatalities more than doubled, coinciding with a steady rise in cocaine production in Colombia and increasing drug flow through the Caribbean corridor. However, the rising death toll also reflects the growing use of cocaine-opioid combinations and particularly a cocaine-fentanyl combination. According to Florida's Medical Examiners Commission, 2,499 of the 2,882 statewide cocaine deaths involved cocaine in combination with other drugs. In Miami-Dade County, which averaged roughly 36 cocaine-related fatalities per month in 2016, the Medical Examiner's Office reported that 84 individuals died with both cocaine and carfentanil in their system.

(U) Officer and Public Safety Information

(U) As only minuscule amounts of fentanyl are being combined into cocaine, dealers and buyers may not know exactly what they are selling or ingesting. If fentanyl is ingested, symptoms include drowsiness, disorientation, sedation, respiratory distress, pin-point pupils, and clammy skin. The onset of these symptoms is dramatic and usually occurs within a few minutes.

(U) Any substance suspected to contain fentanyl should be treated with extreme caution as exposure to a small amount can lead to significant health-related complications, respiratory depression, or death.

(U) In any situation where any fentanyl or fentanyl-related substance might be present, law enforcement should carefully follow safety protocols to avoid accidental exposure. For additional safety information, please use the following resource link below:

https://www.dea.gov/druginfo/Fentanyl_BriefingGuideforFirstResponders_June2017.pdf



(U) This product was prepared by the DEA Miami Field Division. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at dea.onsi@usdoj.gov. For media/press inquiries call (202) 307-7977.