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ALERT to New Jersey Law Enforcement:

Attorney General Announces Comprehensive, Statewide Ban on Synthetic Marijuana

Date: February 29, 2012
To: New Jersey Law Enforcement Agencies
From: Thomas R. Calcagni, Director, New Jersey Division of Consumer Affairs
Re: Comprehensive, Statewide Ban on ALL VARIANTS of Synthetic Marijuana, also known as “K2” and “Spice.”



On Wednesday, February 29, 2012, Attorney General Chiesa announced an Order of the Division of Consumer Affairs, banning the manufacture, distribution, sale, and possession of any of the hundreds of variants of dangerous, manmade chemicals designed to mimic the effects of marijuana, commonly known as “**synthetic marijuana**,” “**K2**,” or “**Spice**.”

Notably, this ban is much more comprehensive than previous efforts to eliminate synthetic marijuana. It includes both broad and specific language that includes **all possible variants of the drug**.

The Order bans ten entire classes of synthetic compounds that imitate the effects of marijuana, and all known or unknown variants of the drug that would fall within each class. The Order also expressly includes “any other synthetic chemical compound that is a cannabinoid receptor agonist and mimics the pharmacological effect of naturally occurring cannabinoids” – in other words, **any synthetic chemical that mimics the effects on the brain of marijuana’s active ingredient**.

Effective immediately upon being signed on Tuesday, February 28, 2012 by Thomas R. Calcagni, Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs, the Order adds these chemicals to the list of **Schedule I Controlled Dangerous Substances** in New Jersey. The drugs are now

subject to the highest level of State control. The manufacture, distribution, sale, or possession of these chemicals is now a **third-degree crime**. Violators may be subject to a **fine of up to \$25,000** and **imprisonment for a three- to five-year term**.

On Wednesday, February 29, 2012, Attorney General Chiesa announced that **individuals who voluntarily surrender these designer drugs to law enforcement within the next 10 days – by 11:59 p.m. Friday, March 9, 2012 – will not face criminal charges**. The announcement is intended to encourage individuals and retailers to immediately hand over the drugs to their nearest State, county, or municipal law enforcement agency.

The Division of Consumer Affairs and its Enforcement Bureau will continue to work with law enforcement agencies across New Jersey, in order to gather and disseminate information about these drugs.



Synthetic marijuana is usually sold in small packets of approximately 500 milligrams to three grams, with marked prices from approximately \$15 to approximately \$40, and with brand names such as “K2,” “K3,” “Spice,” “Kush,” “Down2Earth,” “Comatose Candy,” and **many others**. The packets often contain a mixture of herbs and plant materials that have been coated with chemical agents that affect the brain. The products are often labeled as “**incense**” or “**potpourri**” in order to hide their true nature from law enforcement.

Packets of synthetic marijuana and other suspected designer drugs have been sold at **gas station convenience stores, boardwalk novelty shops, and other locations** across New Jersey. The packages often bear labels claiming the contents are not covered by any existing federal or state ban, creating the impression that they can be sold legally.

The use of synthetic marijuana has been linked to **dangerous side effects** including violent seizures, dangerously elevated heart rates, anxiety attacks, and hallucinations, according to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the National Institute on Drug Abuse. Published reports indicate users have committed suicide or suffered fatal injuries after suffering extreme panic attacks caused by synthetic marijuana use. Reports published in peer-reviewed journals associate synthetic marijuana with psychosis in some patients.

The New Jersey Poison Education and Information Center received 146 calls reporting exposure to synthetic marijuana in 2011 – an alarming **711 percent increase from 2010**. Of those calls, 92 percent resulted in symptoms alarming enough to require treatment in a healthcare facility. Seventy percent of the calls originated in Middlesex, Ocean, Monmouth, Morris, Mercer, and Atlantic counties.

Much more information about these drugs, including a copy of the signed Order, can be found at www.NJConsumerAffairs.gov/designer. Law enforcement agencies seeking information also may call the Division of Consumer Affairs, at 800-242-5846.