


# PINE BLUFF POLICE DEPARTMENT POLICY & PROCEDURES MANUAL

	SYNTHETIC OPIOIDS: PREVENTING EXPOSURE	POLICY NUMBER 248
	CHAPTER: PATROL	ISSUE DATE JANUARY 16, 2024
	ISSUED By: Chief of Police Denise Richardson	EFFECTIVE DATE FEBRUARY 19, 2024
		TOTAL PAGES 5

- I. **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to provide first responding officers and other members of the department with guidelines, instructions, and procedures to prevent exposure to synthetic opioids and related substances.
  
- II. **Discussion:** Synthetic opioids and related substances are designed to be absorbed into the body by all means, including injection, oral ingestion, contact with mucous membranes, inhalation, and via transdermal transmission (through the skin). As such, accidental exposure by first responders is a real danger. Accidental exposure can occur under a number of circumstances, including during the execution of search or arrest warrants, the purchase of synthetic opioids during undercover operations, the processing of drug evidence containing synthetic opioids or related substances, or the processing of non-drug evidence (e.g., drug proceeds, pill presses, scales, or drug paraphernalia) which may be contaminated with these substances.  
 Due to the high potency of synthetic opioids and related substances, exposure to small quantities can cause serious negative health effects, respiratory depression, and even death.  
  
 However, synthetic opioids can be handled safely with proper training and equipment to include hazard recognition and use of personal protective equipment (PPE).

- III. The following job categories have been identified as positions where responders might be exposed to synthetic opioids or its analogues.
- A. **Pre-Hospital Patient Care:** Includes emergency medical services (EMS) providers, including first responders, fire department, police officers, and private companies who attend to individuals with suspected synthetic opioids overdose. Responders may encounter drugs or drug paraphernalia on or near the patient.
  - B. **Law Enforcement:** Law enforcement officers who perform day-to-day law enforcement duties. Law enforcement officers may come into contact with synthetic opioids during the course of their daily activities such as traffic stops, apprehending and searching subjects, and responding to synthetic opioids overdose calls.
  - C. **Investigation and Evidence Handling:** Law enforcement personnel who conduct investigations related to synthetic opioids. Activities may include executing search warrants and collecting, transporting, and storing evidence. Evidence collection activities in the field have the potential to aerosolize powders. In addition, law enforcement personnel who handle evidence in the chain of custody have the potential to be exposed to synthetic opioids unless controls are in place to prevent exposures.
  - D. **Special Operations and Decontamination:** Workers who conduct special operations where exposure to large amounts of synthetic opioids are expected. Examples include hazardous material incident response teams at a release or spill, and law enforcement officers executing search warrants on opioid processing or distribution sites or participating in other tactical operations. These activities may aerosolize powders.
  - E. **Jails and Booking Officers:** Arrestees who are transported to jails and booking stations pose a threat to the officer if these arrestees have been in contact with or using synthetic opioids.
- IV. **Procedures:** Due to the hazardous nature of the synthetic opioids law enforcement personnel, jail and correctional officers, or any first responders who encounter synthetic opioids or related substances

should NOT take samples or otherwise disturb any powdered substances without employing proper personal protective equipment (PPE), as this could lead to accidental exposure. Officers should follow established work practices as well as the following recommendations when synthetic opioids or related substances are known or suspected to be present. If the presence of synthetic opioids is suspected, personnel should immediately contact the appropriate officials within this department who have been trained to handle hazardous materials, or contact the nearest DEA field office for assistance. Having specially trained law enforcement professionals (or a hazardous materials "HAZMAT" incident response team) equipped with the necessary equipment on-site, to include Level "A" PPE, to assess the situation prior to exposure or contamination is recommended.

This includes situations involving unknown powdered substances and/or pill milling or encapsulating operations.

When encountering unknown powders, personnel should use, at the minimum, PPE to include nitrile gloves, N-95 dust mask, eye protection, disposable paper suit, or paper coveralls, and shoe covers. Naloxone should also be readily available for administration. **SEE Department stand-alone Naloxone policy.**



*As matter of reference, it has been determined that it would only take 2-3 milligrams of synthetic opioids to induce respiratory depression, arrest, and possibly death (see photo of penny). When visually compared, 2 to 3 milligrams of synthetic opioids are about the same as five to seven individual grains of table salt<sup>1</sup>*

#### **V. General Precautions:**

- A.** Do not eat, drink, smoke, or use the bathroom while working in an area with known or suspected synthetic opioids.
- B.** Do not touch the eyes, mouth, and nose after touching any surface potentially contaminated with synthetic opioids.
- C.** Field-testing of synthetic opioids or their analogues is not recommended due to an increased risk of exposure to responders performing field-

testing. However, if detection and identification of synthetic opioids is critical to the incident response, develop an incident specific plan to perform the field-testing in accordance with this department's policies and procedures. Personnel specifically trained to perform the field testing should perform the field testing **in the appropriate PPE. Never** handle synthetic opioids or their analogues without the appropriate PPE.

- D. Avoid performing tasks or operations that may aerosolize synthetic opioids due to increased exposure risks. Activities that aerosolize synthetic opioids require higher levels of PPE, should be conducted by appropriately trained personnel, and completed in accordance with department policies and procedures.
- E. Wash hands with soap and water immediately after a potential exposure and after leaving a scene where synthetic opioids is known or suspected to be present to avoid potential exposure and to avoid cross contamination.
- F. Do not use hand sanitizers or bleach solutions to clean contaminated skin.
- G. Officers who are exposed to synthetic opioids should immediately use soap and water to thoroughly wash and rinse contaminated skin. They should take care not to break the skin during the decontamination process and to cover all open wounds. Do not use hand sanitizers or bleach solutions to clean contaminated skin.
- H. All contaminated clothing should be removed and laundered, being careful not to disturb any areas of contamination.
- I. Shower immediately after a potential exposure.
- J. Decontamination of **reusable** PPE and equipment should be done according to the manufacturer's recommendations.
- K. Contaminated **single use** PPE should be placed in labeled durable 6 mil polyethylene bags and disposed of appropriately.<sup>1</sup>

#### VI. K-9 Working Dogs:

- A. Police K-9s performing detection activities, are also at risk of exposure to synthetic opioids and

its analogues. Working dogs should be removed from an area where suspect synthetic opioids are encountered. If exposed, residual drug powder might remain on the dog's body; therefore, the proper precautions and procedures mentioned above should be employed by those handling the dog.