

Sheriff



Larry Ashley, Okaloosa County Sheriff

1250 Eglin Parkway • Shalimar, Florida 32579-1234
Phone: (850) 651-7410 • Email: sheriff@sheriff-okaloosa.org

March 6, 2013

LOCAL SHERIFFS KICK OFF STATEWIDE “DRY SPRING” INITIATIVE



Sheriffs from Okaloosa, Walton, and Bay Counties today held a joint news conference to convey the latest in their ongoing fight to eradicate synthetic drugs from area businesses and to encourage students to have a safe spring break.

“Operation Dry Spring” is a statewide initiative launched by the Florida Sheriff’s Association. Sheriff Larry Ashley of Okaloosa County, Sheriff Mike Adkinson of Walton County, and Sheriff Frank McKeithen of Bay County say synthetic drugs continue to pose a dangerous threat to public health and safety.

“We don’t want college students coming in from other states without an understanding that it’s illegal to purchase or possess these substances in Florida,” said Sheriff Ashley.

Sheriff Ashley and his counterparts have been working to stop the sale of illegal synthetic drugs in area businesses. In addition the OCSO has started a “Gold Star Retailer” campaign with local convenience stores. It involves asking businesses to sign an agreement to NOT sell synthetic drugs and then provides them a poster to display so they can notify patrons of that decision. (Copy of sample agreement attached.)

The Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office is also producing “Dry Spring” and “Safe Summer” public service announcements to air on Beach TV, informing visitors of the dangers of items such as so-called “bath salts” or “spice”.

Since January 2012, the Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office Drug Task Force has made 62 separate undercover buys of illegal synthetic drugs from local businesses, executed 22 search warrants, made four arrests with more pending, and seized eight vehicles along with more than \$625,000 in monies and \$2.9 million in inventory.

As a symbolic gesture at today’s news conference, the Sheriffs had a large construction roller publicly destroy nearly a million dollars in seized drug paraphernalia ordered for destruction by the court.

###



The Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office is accredited by the
Commission for Florida Law Enforcement Accreditation.

“The Okaloosa County Sheriff’s Office provides equal access and equal opportunity in employment and services and does not discriminate”



Cannabinoids, Cathinones and Phenethylamines
(K2 and Bath Salt - Like Substances)

On March 23, 2012, Governor Rick Scott signed into law HB1175 and deemed these “**synthetic substances**” to be a significant threat of the health and public safety within the State of Florida. More recently on December 11, 2012, Attorney General Pam Bondi issued an emergency rule outlawing 22 new additional synthetic substances. These powerful stimulant drugs are produced and marketed as safe alternatives ecstasy, cocaine, amphetamines, marijuana, and other illegal substances and are commonly available on the Internet, in specialty “smoke” shops and local convenience stores. “**Cathinones,**” “**synthetic cannabinoids**” and “**synthetic phenethylamines**” are comprised of varying regulated as well as unregulated chemical substances and are being sold under a variety of names or brands. The law enforcement and medical communities agree that “**cathinones,**” “**synthetic cannabinoids**” and “**synthetic phenethylamines**” represent a serious threat to public health and safety but are becoming increasingly popular due to the perception that they are a safe alternative to illegal drugs. That perception exists primarily because these substances are often easily obtained in local retail establishments. Sale and use of these substances create a significant threat to the health and safety of our community.

J.W. Huffman the chemist who initially synthesized these substances “warns against consumption of synthetic marijuana products such as K-2 or “Spice” that are made from recipes published in his research papers, saying that they can cause hypertension, tachycardia, and “serious and unpredictable psychological effects . . . anybody who uses them is playing Russian roulette.”

Cited as an “imminent threat to public safety” by the DEA

The Okaloosa County Sheriff Office seeks your participation along with the Attorney General’s Office, Florida Department of Law Enforcement your local Chamber of Commerce and our agency in the “Partners for Substance Free Okaloosa” program working to ensure these substances are not available for purchase in our community. Through participation in the program you will be recognized as a business committed to the safety and wellbeing of our community, and can proudly display a sign on your establishment advertising your participation in the program and denouncing the sale and use of these substances.

If you would like to participate, simply sign below.

I _____, who own/operates _____ located at _____ pledge that my establishment will not possess/sell/trade/provide these substances to anyone. I value the safety of my community and the wellbeing of my customers over any profits to be gained through the sale from these harmful substances.