



Advisory Council on Traffic Safety

# ACTS NEWSLETTER

## ADVISORY COUNCIL ON TRAFFIC SAFETY

*Marty Haynes - Chairman; Hamilton County Commission*

*Clarence Shattuck - Vice-Chairman; Sessions Court Judge*

*Monica Baker - Coordinator; Highway Safety Education*

Save the Date ... January 27 12:00 NOON

ACTS LUNCHEON.... Golden Corral on Gunbarrel Rd.

TOPIC: Spice Labs and Synthetic Marijuana - Questions? 209-8204

January  
2016

## A deadly drug called 'K2' has taken over an entire block in New York City

Source: Matthew Speiser, [Business Insider Magazine](#)

On the southwest corner of 125th Street and Park Avenue, 42-year-old East Harlem resident Samuel Belmore watched as an ambulance tried to squeeze its way through traffic.

Belmore — who prefers to go by his street name "Coca Dope" — said the ambulances come around several times a day to "pick up the people who drop."



A woman holds out a blunt filled with the synthetic cannabinoid known as K2.

In recent months, 125th Street in East Harlem has become a flash point of a New York City epidemic involving K2, a drug also known as synthetic marijuana or Spice, as The New York Times reported recently.

K2's potency, widespread availability, and price — a package can be purchased for as little as \$5 at local bodegas — have made it increasingly popular in New York, especially among the young and the homeless. Many hard-drug users are turning to the drug for those reasons.

### A Public Health Crisis

US Attorney Preet Bharara recently called the drug a "[public-health crisis that had reached epic proportions](#)."

Synthetic marijuana, K2, and Spice are nicknames for synthetic cannabinoids, mind-altering drugs which can be up to [100 times more potent](#) than traditional marijuana. The drugs, which are often [produced in powdered form in underground labs in China](#), are shipped to the US, liquefied, and doused on dry plant matter.

## Commissioner's Corner



Commissioner Marty Haynes, District 3

We live and work in a changing world, as we've learned from the last ACTS meeting, and will continue to focus on

for this meeting. The types of drugs that are available and in use in our community are always changing, so I'm grateful that our law enforcement agencies value training and current trends and information so much.

The drugs are known to produce unpredictable and sometimes deadly effects.

They have been linked to an estimated 2,300 emergency-room visits in New York City over a recent two-month period.

Standing on a sidewalk, Belmore, the East Harlem resident, took a large puff from a blunt filled with K2. He told Business Insider he was first introduced to the drug in 2008, after coming home from prison. It was marketed to him as a cheap drug that wouldn't register on a drug test.

"I'll tell you one thing. The first man who went to the store and bought that incense and smoked it and got high is a rich mofo somewhere," Belmore joked.

Down the block, two police officers stood outside a deli.

"[K2 is] everywhere around here," one of the officers said, motioning to the scores of people idling near street corners and against building walls.

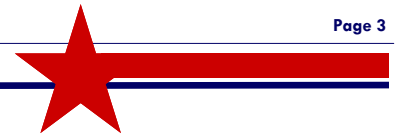
Enforcement of synthetic cannabinoids has proven difficult. US Drug Enforcement Administration spokesman Matthew Barden told Business Insider that chemists who produce the chemicals in the drugs have been known to constantly tweak their formula to undermine US drug laws.

In response, the DEA has had to classify dozens of iterations of synthetic cannabinoids as Schedule 1-controlled substances. The Federal Analogue Act also allows unidentified substances to be treated as illegal drugs if they are found to be chemically similar to scheduled substances.

NYPD Commissioner Bill Bratton recently described the drugs as "weaponized marijuana" and vowed to rid the city of them. Currently, smoking the drug in public in New York is a violation of the sanitary code and violators are issued a summons.



An ambulance loads a patient into the back near 125th Street on Lexington Avenue. Matthew Speiser/ Business Insider



Recently, the NYPD and the DEA took down a massive K2 drug ring in New York, raiding 93 bodegas, delis, and warehouses. Many of them dot 125th Street in East Harlem.

"This is a scourge on our society, affecting the most disadvantaged neighborhoods and our most challenged citizens. It affects teenagers in public housing, homeless in the city shelter system, and it's quite literally flooding our streets," Bratton said in a statement after the most recent operation that involved the inspection of six outlets suspected of selling the drug in this part of East Harlem. "This is marketed as synthetic marijuana, some call it K2 ... its real name is poison."

## Sucking the life out of a neighborhood

William Wells, a middle-aged man who has been living on the streets on and off for the last 10 years, told Business Insider that he first discovered K2 a year ago. He now believes he is addicted.

"My brain is connected to the chemicals," he said repeatedly on a recent day.

For anybody interested in trying the drug, Wells has a dire warning. (continued on back)



A bodega on Lexington Avenue between 124th and 125th Street Matthew Speiser/ Business Insider



## Officer John Collins, CPD

Officer Collins will be sharing some of the latest information available about synthetic marijuana/ spice labs/ K-2 that officers in California provided. He'll be presenting a subset of a four hour training presentation. Officer Collins is a familiar face at the ACTS Council, as well as the Hamilton County Anti-Drug Coalition, and the City of Chattanooga Beer Board.

## Need more news hot off the presses?

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"It will have you running down the block. It will have you fighting yourself. It will have you getting very violent. It will have you living like a bum," Wells said in a panicked tone. "I wish I could stop, but I can't stop. I can't stop."

The toll K2 has taken on the homeless population is also being felt by local residents. A 40-year-old East Harlem native, who asked to be referred to only as Miguel, says he witnessed first-hand the explosion of K2 in 2008, and that illicit production and sale of the drug is deeply embedded in the neighborhood.

"K2 is being sold 24 hours a day around here," Miguel said. "They come in these colorful packages with all these crazy names, and up until police started coming around, the shopkeepers were selling the drugs right in the window."

Miguel pointed out three bodegas near 124th Street and Lexington Avenue that were recently raided by law enforcement for suspicion of selling K2 — [a claim confirmed by the NYPD](#). Now he says police sit in unmarked vehicles all over the neighborhood to observe the trafficking of the drug.

Miguel sees the drug as a parasite that is sucking the life out of his community. "You can't come around here and not smell it," he said. "Every day I see people doing it right there on the street. It makes them stuck. They stand in one place for hours at a time."

Since the raids, [the NYPD has stepped up enforcement](#), forcing much of the homeless population out of the area. In addition, Bratton has said he will form a 38-officer unit to patrol the neighborhood more aggressively.

But the drug could be hard to get rid of.

"K2 is always going to be big, man," one area resident recently told Business Insider. "Anytime you got something like that, how can it not be big? Taking it away is gonna be a problem."



Prepared by Monica Baker  
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Lexington Avenue near the intersection of 125th Street.  
Speiser/ Business Insider