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## **U.S. Poison Centers Raise Alarm about Toxic Substance Marketed as Bath Salts; States Begin Taking Action**

ALEXANDRIA, VA. – U.S. poison centers have taken 1,241 calls regarding toxic products marketed as “bath salts” so far this year, showing that public health threat presented by the products has yet to abate.

Poison centers took 298 calls in 2010 about the products, which doctors and clinicians at U.S. poison centers say cause increased blood pressure, increased heart rate, agitation, hallucinations, extreme paranoia and delusions. In 2011 alone, poison centers representing 47 states and the District of Columbia have received calls about these products.

On Thursday, Jan. 6, Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal announced he was classifying the substances as a Schedule 1 drug in Louisiana, meaning selling, buying, or possessing the substances would incur the same legal penalties as someone selling, buying or possessing heroin. Since then, the state of Florida has followed suit, issuing an emergency order criminalizing possession of the substances.

Mark Ryan, director of the Louisiana Poison Center, said the substances are the worst he has seen in 20 years at the poison center.

“These products create a very severe paranoia that we believe could cause users to harm themselves or others,” he said.

The products, which are being touted as cocaine substitutes, have been sold on the Internet and, in some states, are being sold at gas stations and head shops. They're known by a variety of names, including “Red Dove,” “Blue Silk,” “Zoom,” “Bloom,” “Cloud Nine,” “Ocean Snow,” “Lunar Wave,” “Vanilla Sky,” “Ivory Wave,” “White Lightning,” “Scarface” and “Hurricane Charlie.” Ryan said they appear to create intense cravings not unlike those methamphetamine users have.

The products are believed to contain Methylenedioxypropylamphetamine, or MDPV, a chemical that is not approved for medical use in the United States. Ryan said he also has received reports of these substances being sold as insect repellent or plant fertilizers.

Packages of the powdered substance labeled bath salts indicate that the products are “not for human consumption,” but Ryan said most patients calling poison centers have snorted the substances. In at least one case, he said, a person injected the substance into his veins.

Jim Hirt, executive director of the American Association of Poison Control Centers, said poison centers are ready to answer questions about bath salts or any other product that could pose harm to users.

"Poison centers are staffed with medical professionals who are trained to know how to treat poison exposures of all types," he said. "We offer free, confidential services 24 hours a day, and we'd urge people with questions about products such as these to call their poison center at 1-800-222-1222."

The American Association of Poison Control Centers supports the nation's poison control centers. Poison centers are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, and offer free and confidential services.

For questions about poison or poison prevention, call your poison control center at 1-800-222-1222.