



Yuma County Sheriff's Office

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PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Counterfeit Pills and Overdose Deaths

Location of Incident: Yuma County, AZ

The Yuma County Sheriff's Office would like to make the community aware of an increased number of opioid related overdoses within Yuma County. The majority of overdoses have stemmed from counterfeit pills containing fentanyl.

Fentanyl, a powerful opioid 100 times more powerful than morphine, is being mixed with other chemicals and pressed into pills that look identical to legitimate medications such as hydrocodone, Xanax, or other medications often prescribed for pain or anxiety. These counterfeit pills are most commonly being supplied by Mexican drug cartels and are introduced into our community by illegal importation and smuggling efforts.

Based on a sampling of tablets seized nationwide in 2019, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) found that approximately 27 percent of counterfeit pills contained potentially lethal doses of fentanyl. A lethal dosage of fentanyl is approximately 2 to 3 milligrams, which is about the equivalent of a few grains of salt. There are no controls such as legitimate laboratories or scientists being utilized by drug cartels when manufacturing these counterfeit pills. A person is risking their life any time they consume one of these counterfeit pills.

Yuma County continues to see an increase in drug related overdose deaths, with a majority related to opioids. There were 33 suspected overdose deaths in 2018 and 47 in 2019. As of September 2, 2020, there have been 43 suspected overdose deaths.

The increase in opioid related deaths has been observed throughout Arizona. According to the Arizona Department of Health Services, there have been 49,753 suspected opioid overdoses and 6,857 suspected opioid deaths in Arizona from June 15, 2017 to August 28, 2020.

Local law enforcement agencies, to include the Yuma County Sheriff's Office, are continuing to train and equip their officers with Naloxone (Narcan), a medication that when administered in time, can aid in the prevention of death due to an opioid overdose.

If you believe that someone is experiencing an opioid overdose, call 911 immediately. Some signs/symptoms of someone experiencing an overdose may include the following:

- Heavy nodding, deep sleep, hard to wake up, or vomiting
- Slow or shallow breathing (less than 1 breath every 5 seconds), snoring, gurgling or choking sounds
- Pale blue or gray lips, fingernails, or skin
- Clammy, sweaty skin

If you or someone you know is struggling with an opioid addiction, please contact the free, 24/7 ADHS confidential hotline at 1-888-688-4222 or via email at AzOarline@gmail.com. Additional information can be found at <https://www.azdhs.gov/oarline>.

For more information about the Opioid Epidemic in Arizona, please visit the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) at <https://www.azdhs.gov/prevention/womens-childrens-health/injury-prevention/opioid-prevention/index.php>.

Information Released By: Lt. Sam Pavlak, Public Information Officer