

## Fentanyl/Carfentanil Officer Safety Warning

In the last year, UK Emergency Services have seen a dramatic increase in the availability of dangerous synthetic opioids. The majority of these are structural derivatives of the synthetic drug “Fentanyl.” Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid currently listed as a controlled drug that mimics the effects of morphine in the human body, but has a potency 50–100 times that of morphine. Due to the availability of Fentanyl, both international and domestic criminal organisations are increasingly utilising this as an adulterant in heroin and other controlled substances. The presence of these synthetic opioids in the illicit drug market is extremely concerning and has led to a significant increase in overdose incidents and overdose related deaths throughout the nation.

### **WARNING**

**There is a significant threat to Emergency Services personnel who may come in contact with Fentanyl and other Fentanyl-related substances through routine law enforcement, emergency or life-saving activities. Since Fentanyl can be ingested orally, inhaled through the nose or mouth, absorbed through the skin or eyes, any substance suspected to contain Fentanyl must be treated with extreme caution; as exposure to a small amount can lead to significant health-related complications, respiratory depression, or even death.**

Fentanyl can be found in white powder, skin patch (gel) or tablet form.



**Less than 2 micrograms (less than a grain of salt) of some types of Fentanyl may be lethal.**

There is intelligence that it is being cut with street drugs to increase potency and overdose deaths linked to Fentanyl cut into other drugs are increasing around the UK.

In the US it is estimated that 10,000 overdose deaths may be as a result of Fentanyl and similar drugs and has claimed law enforcement lives there through accidental contact. As it is cut in such small quantities into street drugs, detecting it is extremely difficult outside of a laboratory.

Prescribed medical Fentanyl products, packaged correctly, present minimal risks if handled carefully with basic protection (nitrile gloves). Illicit Fentanyl, in a packaged state (e.g. in vapour seal bags) may be handled and packaged following safety advice from your CSI (as far as practicable a minimum of paper coveralls, nitrile gloves, eye and oral/nasal protection).

**Fentanyl Packages of any type, illicit or otherwise, must not be opened without expert advice.**

If you encounter what you suspect to be fentanyl in open containers or in loose powder form, **DO NOT TOUCH** or otherwise disturb it to reduce the risk of it becoming airborne in dust particulate.

**EVACUATE IMMEDIATELY** and seek expert advice via control room. Control rooms should liaise with your force CBRN Tactical Advisor and the National CBRN Centre.

Symptoms of exposure may include respiratory depression or arrest, drowsiness, disorientation, rapid loss of consciousness, pinpoint pupils and clammy skin. Symptoms usually occur within minutes and should be treated as a medical emergency. Individuals suffering from exposure should remove themselves from the scene into fresh air and wash affected areas with soap and water thoroughly. Medical services should be informed the casualty may have been exposed to Fentanyl. **ALL NHS PARAMEDICS CARRY DRUGS THAT CAN REVERSE THESE EFFECTS.**