

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs



PRESS RELEASE

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District Adopts Synthetic Drug Regulations

New Regulations Help District Combat Synthetic Drug Sales

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) – The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) announced today the adoption of new regulations aimed at curbing the sale and use of synthetic drugs, which are often manufactured to evade law enforcement. The new regulations would allow the District to take enforcement action against a business that sells synthetic drugs consisting of substances identified on a controlled substances list or new variations and derivatives of those substances.

“Synthetic drugs present a danger to communities, especially to children. Use of these substances has been linked to severely adverse health effects, including death,” said Mayor Vincent C. Gray. **“The District has already taken steps toward eliminating synthetic drugs from the District, and these regulations are the next phase of that.”**

Synthetic drugs are manufactured substances intended to mimic the effects of illegal drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, and ecstasy. Often, they are manufactured from substances that were not, at the time of manufacture, included on controlled substances lists. To stay ahead of law enforcement, manufacturers frequently change the composition of synthetic drugs, so that the products continue to be free of controlled substances at the time of manufacture. By the time a new substance can be added to controlled substances lists, manufacturers may have replaced it with something similar but new.

The District’s new regulations target the sale of substances that resemble synthetic drugs in appearance and effect. Government personnel could treat products that are exorbitantly expensive and contain unusual warnings as synthetic drugs. For example, regulators could deduce that one gram of glass cleaner selling for \$50 and containing a warning “not for sale to minors” is a synthetic drug. If a business has any questions about a product that they are selling, the business can seek clarification from DCRA about whether the product qualifies as a synthetic drug.

Under the new regulations, DCRA can potentially fine and revoke the license of any business making a prohibited sale. In concert with enforcement efforts, DCRA will also conduct an education campaign, so that businesses and consumers are well informed about the new regulations. First offenders will generally be given a warning, but upon subsequent violations, consequences will escalate quickly.

“Our goal is compliance, not shutting down businesses; some businesses may not fully realize what they are selling. We try to educate and engage first,” said DCRA Director Nicholas A. Majett. **“Make no mistake,**

though, the continued sale of these substances, whether or not on a controlled substances list, will not be tolerated.”

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