

Police and Fire: Protecting Workers At Risk

Two CVMIC member drug exposures already this year! Seven people affected

Situation #1: Spore Exposure

A drug search warrant was executed at a residence where investigators suspected a grow system. Officers made entry and successfully seized several plants as well as enclosed grow chamber for psilocybin mushrooms. Officers didn't realize they had entered a hazardous environment and hadn't donned any respiratory protection. They continued with processing the scene rather than securing the premises and waiting for the delivery of respirators or at minimum disposable respirators.

The seized plants, grow system materials and paraphernalia were temporarily bagged and transported to the police department evidence room to be properly packaged. Five of the officers that made entry to that home would later seek treatment for respiratory concerns.

You could say that the situation "mushroomed" days later. Many of the seized items had been placed on a police department office desk including the mushroom grow chamber where it sat for nearly 2-days. The cover to the mushroom grow chamber was opened by an employee which caused employee #6 to seek treatment for suspected spore inhalation, the individual allegedly experienced coughing, nosebleeds and headaches.

Situation #2: Fentanyl Exposure

An investigator wearing rubber gloves searched through a household garbage bag for drug related evidence. The contents of a fentanyl patch were sent airborne and immediately inhaled while the officer was standing over the bag sifting through the garbage. The officer was treated for the immediate effects of feeling light headed, heart racing and difficulty breathing.



Fentanyl, a schedule II prescription drug, is a powerful synthetic opioid analgesic that is similar to morphine but is 50 to 100 times more potent.

2 milligrams of powder next to a penny

The DEA, EMS Association, Firefighter Association, NIOSH and CDC (just to name a few sources) have been publishing drug exposure warnings for years. If you haven't already, it's time to

acknowledge the need to implement personal protective equipment requirements during the handling and potential exposure to risks like those described above.

What can you do? Require investigators, evidence techs, property room staff and other potentially affected employees to wear protective gear such as powder free gloves (nitrile or latex), safety glasses, chemical resistant aprons and respirators. Be aware there are OSHA regulations [OSHA's Respiratory Protection Program](#) when you require employees to use respirators so click on the links to learn more about your responsibility related to respirator use (including paper masks) as well as recommendations by the DEA and NIOSH to prevent occupational exposures.

Preventing Occupational Exposure to Emergency Responders

A GREAT and INFORMATIVE article explaining potential hazards, risk assessment, recommended respiratory protection, gloves, eye protection, coveralls (clothing – sleeves, etc.) as well as additional informational links. **Go to:** <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/topics/fentanyl/risk.html>

OSHA 1910.134 Respiratory Protection Program

In any workplace where respirators are necessary to protect the health of the employee or whenever respirators are required by the employer, the employer shall establish and implement a written respiratory protection program with worksite-specific procedures. Required medical evaluations and fit testing explained in the standard. **Go to:** https://www.osha.gov/pls/oshaweb/owadisp.show_document?p_table=standards&p_id=12716

DEA Issues Carfentanil Warning to Police and Public

Dangerous opioid 10,000 times more potent than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl. **Go to:** <https://www.dea.gov/divisions/hq/2016/hq092216.shtml>

DEA Roll Call Video (an informative 3 minute clip): How to Protect Yourself from Accidental Exposure to Fentanyl

Go to: <http://go.usa.gov/chBgh>

May 12th, 2017 Overdose of Ohio officer after traffic stop highlights danger to police and public of accidental exposure to powerful, deadly street drugs

Go to: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-4508582/Ohio-cop-accidentally-overdoses-fentanyl.html>

PoliceOne.com

Fentanyl's deadly risk to cops is changing the way narcotics officers operate

Go to: <https://www.policeone.com/drug-interdiction-narcotics/articles/193588006-Fentanyls-deadly-risk-to-cops-is-changing-the-way-narcotics-officers-operate/>