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News Release

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KAUA'I POLICE DEPARTMENT
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Kaua'i police warn public about rise of Fentanyl abuse on island

Kaua'i police are warning the public of the increased illegal use of Fentanyl on the island.

The most recent incident linked to the substance occurred on Wednesday, September 22, at approximately 6 p.m. at Kapa'a Ball Park. Kaua'i Police Department (KPD) Dispatch received a call regarding two unresponsive female residents, ages 30 and 40, on the ground, next to a pickup truck at the park.

Both women exhibited signs of a drug overdose; one was not breathing and the other was having labored, shallow breathing.

Police were first to arrive on scene and observed that bystanders had already started performing CPR on the first woman.

Patrol officers took over CPR on the first woman and administered Narcan, a nasal spray used in emergencies to treat suspected opioid overdoses. The patrol supervisor on shift tended to the second woman and Narcan was administered to her as well.

Both women were revived and received additional medical assistance from arriving Kaua'i Fire Department and American Medical Response personnel. AMR subsequently transported the women to Wilcox Medical Center.

“I would like to acknowledge and commend the actions of the community members and officers that performed the life-saving measures,” said Chief of Police Todd G. Raybuck. “Their quick and heroic actions, combined with the assistance of medics and firefighters, saved these two women’s lives.”

A number of related deaths due to synthetic opioids, which includes Fentanyl, are suspected to have occurred over the past few months. Toxicology results are still pending.

“We have seen a growing number of cases which appear to be drug overdoses,” said Patrol Services Bureau Assistant Chief Mark Begley. “We believe that Fentanyl, an extremely toxic and dangerous drug, has been intentionally ingested or has been laced in batches of other drugs such as Cocaine, Heroin, and Methamphetamine. Some of the recent overdoses have resulted in death. In this particular case, we believe that the rapid availability and administration of Narcan saved the lives of these two women, who otherwise would have died. However, it is critical to understand that Narcan does not guarantee your survival from a drug overdose, or full recovery from the damaging effects of an overdose.”

According to Cody Bonilla, supervisor at Kaua’i American Medical Response, Narcan has been administered by medical professionals on 18 separate occasions within the last month to patients on the island who exhibited signs of opioid drug overdose – five of those patients expired despite medical treatment.

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that, according to the Drug Enforcement Agency, is approximately 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin as an analgesic (pain reliever). The pharmaceutical drug was originally developed for use as an analgesic and anesthetic for cancer patients. The pharmaceutical product can be used in a variety of ways, such as a patch on the skin, a lozenge or tablet, or as an injectable.

Some of the results of an overdose include the recipient acting as if in a stupor with a reduced level or loss of consciousness, pupillary size changes, nausea/vomiting, limp body, cold and clammy skin,

coma and/or respiratory failure. The DEA notes that the presence of a triad of symptoms such as a coma, pinpoint pupils and respiratory depression are strongly suggestive of opioid poisoning.

In March of 2019, KPD personnel were trained on the proper use of Narcan. Police officers were subsequently issued Narcan and carry it with them while on patrol.

“It is of paramount importance that this community stands together to find solutions for those who need help moving away from their interest and/or reliance on drugs,” said AC Begley. “Their lives depend on it. Law enforcement alone will never be able to solve this crisis.”

Kaua’i police plan to follow-up with more educational material for the community. Please follow our social media accounts for updates.

For more information online and for resources to help with substance abuse, please visit the State of Hawai’i Department of Health Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division at <https://health.hawaii.gov/substance-abuse/>, <https://health.hawaii.gov/substance-abuse/prevention-treatment/> or visit McKenna Recovery Center at <http://www.mckennarecoverycenter.com/lihue-kaui>.

If you would like to report any suspected illegal use and/or distribution of fentanyl please call KPD Dispatch at [241-1711](tel:241-1711). For those who wish to remain anonymous please submit a tip to Crime Stoppers Kaua’i at www.cskauai.org.

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