

“SPICE”

- From September 1, 2011 to present, EPPD records show a total of 31 cases.
 - Prior to the new penalty group (from 2006 until August 31, 2011), they show a total of 9 cases.
 - Of course, with spice just emerging throughout that time period, there may have been more cases that were simply not identified as being spice.
- The Narcotics Section has handled cases but probably to a lesser degree than non-border areas.
 - This is because so much real marijuana is available here that the spice usage is probably more novelty/curiosity or inability of being able to contact a dealer.
- It falls under Penalty Group 2a which has only been in effect since September 1, 2011.
 - The penalties for possession are very similar to those of marijuana with penalties for distribution being more similar to those for cocaine and heroin.
 - Prior to September 1, 2011, it was handled as a non-penalty group dangerous drug.
- For a time, crime labs were unable to analyze it, although they can now.
 - There is also no field test for it so there may be times when officers confiscate such evidence but title the report as a general information report pending the official lab test so EPPD statistics may not be 100% accurate as to the number of cases we actually encounter.
- Suspect demographics vary widely as there is no one group (age, race, gender, ethnicity, education level, etc.) disproportionately represented.
 - One exception is possibly the military as EPPD receives information on dealers, users, etc. but we do not know if that is just increased reporting or an actual prevalence among military personnel.
- The biggest problem with spice is that the components that provide the high can be up to 50 times more potent than marijuana and any given batch can vary widely in potency.
 - People on spice do not feel pain, have no sense of reality (running around outside naked, etc.), have no ability to comprehend instructions, will fight and keep fighting officers, among other things.
- For officers dealing with spice users, it is difficult at best and does pose concerns for EPPD.
- What is EPPD doing about Spice?
 - They handle cases as they happen.
 - Also, when public presentations are conducted regarding narcotics, spice and bath salts (synthetic meth/heroin) are covered for educational purposes.
- According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse
“Because the chemicals used in Spice have a high potential for abuse and no medical benefit, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has designated the five active chemicals most frequently found in Spice as Schedule I controlled substances, making it illegal to sell, buy, or possess them. Manufacturers of Spice products attempt to evade these legal restrictions by substituting different chemicals in their mixtures, while the DEA continues to monitor the situation and evaluate the need for updating the list of banned cannabinoids.”

At this point, there is not a bill filed at the state or federal level that deals with this issue but DEA and law enforcement agencies are watching the matter closely.