

(U) Carfentanil in Pennsylvania



DEA
BULLETIN



This DEA Bulletin is based on preliminary reporting and may be subject to updating as additional information becomes available.

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Event

(U) The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Philadelphia Field Division (PFD) conducted an analysis of drug seizure and fatal overdose data as an indicator of carfentanil in Pennsylvania. Carfentanil is a Schedule II synthetic opioid, typically used as an analgesic for large mammals, and is approximately 10,000 times more potent than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl.¹

Significance

(U) Carfentanil was first identified in Pennsylvania's illicit drug supply in 2016 after being found in both drug seizures and overdose deaths. Carfentanil and other fentanyl-related substances (FRSs) have emerged as a significant drug threat in Pennsylvania, with sharp increases in overdose deaths associated since 2015. This analysis was based on data obtained from the National Forensic Lab Information System (NFLIS)², originally reported by seven law enforcement laboratories in Pennsylvania.

Details

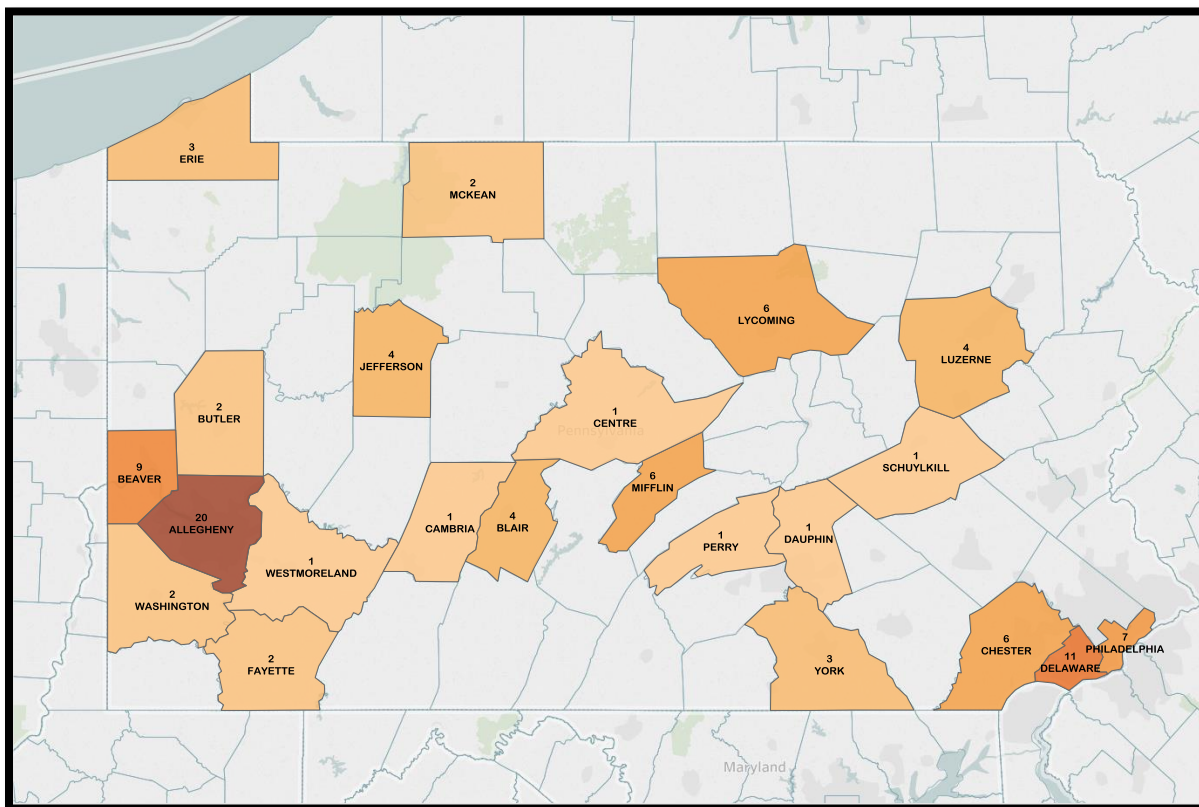
(U) Carfentanil was first identified in Pennsylvania during drug seizure analysis conducted in September 2016. Since that time, a total of 97 exhibits have been analyzed and reported to NFLIS by Pennsylvania law enforcement laboratories. Of these exhibits, approximately 45 percent were submitted for analysis during the months of June and July 2017. Additional analysis of carfentanil exhibits may be pending, as there is a time lag between seizure, submission, analysis, and reporting.

(U) In terms of composition, 25 percent of the submitted exhibits were found to contain carfentanil with no additional substances. Fentanyl was found in 41 percent of the exhibits, heroin was found in 38 percent of the exhibits, and 12 percent contained both heroin and fentanyl. Carfentanil seizures have been identified in 22 Pennsylvania counties (see Figure 1).

¹ Information is from the DEA National Drug Threat Assessment, 2017

² The DEA NFLIS collects results from drug chemistry analyses conducted by state, local, and federal forensic laboratories across the country. NFLIS provides analytical results of drugs seized by law enforcement and is a source of information for monitoring and drug trafficking in the United States. The State of Pennsylvania currently has nine local laboratories submitting to NFLIS.

(U) Figure 1. Number of Carfentanil Exhibits Submitted by Pennsylvania Counties, 2016-17.



Source: National Forensic Lab Information System

(U) In addition, two exhibits contained carfentanil with cocaine, and three exhibits contained carfentanil with cocaine and heroin. This may be indicative of a poly-drug organization and, potentially, several separate sources of supply. Additional separate combinations included carfentanil mixed with p-fluoroisobutyryl fentanyl; furanyl fentanyl, and acetyl fentanyl.

(U) Carfentanil typically arrives into the United States via mail services from source countries such as China. It has been identified in powder, pill, and liquid form. In Pennsylvania, the majority of carfentanil exhibits were in powder form (62 percent).

(U) In addition, more than 85 carfentanil-positive overdose deaths have been reported in 13 Pennsylvania counties in 2017 (Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Centre, Chester, Crawford, Dauphin, Erie, Fayette, Lehigh, Montgomery, Philadelphia, and Somerset).³ It is possible that additional carfentanil-related deaths have occurred in Pennsylvania but were not identified due to insufficient toxicology testing.

(U) The introduction of carfentanil into the illicit drug supply presents an increased danger to drug users and first responders.

³ Data received from the Allegheny County Office of the Medical Examiner, Philadelphia Medical Examiner's Office, and NMS Labs.

(U) This product was prepared by the DEA Philadelphia Field Division. Comments and questions may be addressed to the Chief, Analysis and Production Section at dea.onsi@usdoj.gov.