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For Immediate Release

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Cocaine Laced with Fentanyl Leads to Multiple Deaths, Overdoses

Authorities Issue Warning to the Public after Beach Community Fatalities

San Diego County District Attorney [Summer Stephan](#) joined the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), San Diego Police Department, San Diego County Health and Human Services (HHSA) and San Diego County Medical Examiner's Office today to warn the public about a spate of deaths in beach communities connected to cocaine laced with the highly-potent and often deadly drug fentanyl. This past weekend three people died, and two others overdosed but survived, related to the ingestion of what initial toxicology results show was cocaine laced with fentanyl. The deaths occurred in the areas of Pacific Beach and Ocean Beach; the victims ranged in age from 30 to 47-years old.

Authorities are not able to say publicly where the drugs may have been distributed or obtained. Various law enforcement agencies are investigating and no arrests have been made. In the meantime, investigators believe more of the dangerous drug combination may be being sold by dealers.

"We're seeing a dangerous trend of drug dealers and cartels cutting various drugs with fentanyl and increasingly it's a recipe for death," said District Attorney Summer Stephan. "The public needs to be aware of the danger of using any controlled substance, but specifically quantities of cocaine that are currently on the street in San Diego that may be laced with fentanyl."

A DEA-led task force is investigating the recent deaths and said the danger of fentanyl-laced drugs goes beyond cocaine.

"DEA is seizing cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin and counterfeit pills that look like legitimate pharmaceutical tablets that are laced with deadly fentanyl throughout San Diego and Imperial Counties," said DEA Special Agent in Charge Karen Flowers. "The public needs to be aware that it is not possible to tell if a product contains fentanyl. There is no test available at the drug store or from your dealer. The only test is in a laboratory. Don't let your loved ones find out the test results at the mortuary."

Deaths specifically from fentanyl or fentanyl in combination with other drugs in San Diego County are spiking. 81 fatal overdoses were reported last year alone, more than double the number in 2016. Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine even in tiny doses. As little as two milligrams of fentanyl is a fatal dose for most people. Fentanyl can be up to 50 times

more potent than heroin, and overdoses may require additional Naloxone to reverse. Naloxone is a medication that reverses overdose from opioids. Additional doses of Naloxone are sometimes needed to reverse fentanyl overdoses due to the potency of fentanyl.

“The Medical Examiner has seen a steady increase in fatal overdose cases over the years where fentanyl has been added to opiates”, said San Diego County’s Chief Medical Examiner Dr. Glenn Wagner. “But now we’re seeing an emerging pattern of cases where fentanyl is unexpectedly added to other drug combinations. It’s a new, deeply concerning trend.”

“Illegal drug use continues to negatively affect all of our communities. The recent deaths are yet another reminder of the dangers of illicit drug use,” said Chief David Nisleit. “The drug dealers and drug cartels do not care about the people in our communities. The San Diego Police Department will continue to strictly enforce our narcotics laws and work with the District Attorney’s Office and its prosecution of drug dealers who continue to poison our residents. We encourage anyone suffering from addiction to seek professional help.”

“These cases show the deadly and unknown nature of drugs that are being sold on the street,” said Dr. Sayone Thihalolipavan, County deputy public health officer. “A variety of drug treatment options and programs are available in San Diego County. If you or someone you know is in need of drug treatment, please get help.”

Individuals can call the San Diego County Access and Crisis Line 888-724-7240 or 2-1-1 San Diego. Both of these resources are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney’s Office

The San Diego County DA’s Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue justice and support victims daily across San Diego County. DA Summer Stephan has devoted her life to protecting children and families and providing justice to the voiceless and most vulnerable. She is a national leader in the fight against sexual exploitation and human trafficking, and has served as a Deputy District Attorney in San Diego County for 28 years.

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