

Broward Briefings

Substance Abuse

Information for Action



November 2014

Fort Lauderdale, Florida

“Flakka” or “gravel” is the dangerous “bath salt” synthetic stimulant, *alpha*-PVP

Widespread sales and use of a drug with the street name “flakka” or “gravel” are reported locally. Hundreds of cases involving it have been analyzed as the drug ***alpha*-PVP** by South Florida crime labs in 2014. Its use has been increasing across the nation as well. It appears to be sold by low level drug dealers who purchase it in quantity from internet sites and repackage it in gram size packets or capsules. It may also be adulterated with methamphetamine or other drugs.

Alpha-PVP sold as “flakka” or “gravel” is a potent stimulant at a low dose but causes bizarre behavior with higher concentrations. The drug poses substantial risk for addiction and adverse effects. Users are seeking euphoric stimulation, but often experience anxiety, an accelerated heart rate, paranoia, agitation, and psychosis. Some users have reported “the inability to even think.” One of the more severe side effects associated with *alpha*-PVP is **excited delirium**, a syndrome of violent behavior often accompanied by seriously elevated body temperature (or hyperthermia), as well as a breakdown of muscle tissue that leads to the release of muscle fiber contents into the blood (or rhabdomyolysis) and kidney failure. If the user survives, he may face dialysis for life. Excited delirium can also result in death. There were 126 deaths from this class of drug (“bath salt” synthetic cathinones) in Florida in 2013 and more in 2014.

The name “gravel” comes from the white, crystal chunks appearance in wholesale quantities and is the most frequently used name for *alpha*-PVP nationally. “Flakka,” the name used in South Florida, may refer to the Hispanic term for a “beautiful, elegant woman who charms all she meets.” It may also be associated with a famous hip-hop disc jockey.



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