

# Counterfeit pills containing fentanyl potentially linked to fatal overdoses

The Observer

UNION COUNTY — The La Grande Police Department and the Center for Human Development issued a warning late Friday afternoon, April 23, about fentanyl-laced drugs.

Over the course of the past several weeks, La Grande police have seen an alarming trend in calls for service that appear to be related to overdoses of suspected counterfeit opioid pills, according to the statement. In several of these cases, police have recovered pills that are similar in appearance to the counterfeit fentanyl-laced opioid pills that have been related to fatal overdoses in communities all over the U.S. These pills are sometimes called “Blues” or “M30s.”

“We have cases that are still under investigation and the pills have been sent to the Oregon State Police Forensic Laboratory for analysis,” La Grande Chief of Police Gary Bell said. “I cannot emphasize enough that anyone who gets pills from anywhere other than a pharmacy should assume that they are counterfeit and they may contain potentially deadly amounts of fentanyl.”

The counterfeit pills resemble pills manufactured by pharmaceutical companies. However, these pills contain fentanyl, a synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, and up to 50 times more potent than heroin. Even tiny doses, as little

as 2 milligrams — the size of two grains of salt — is a fatal dose for most people, according to the warning.

“Everyone should be talking about this issue with their loved ones,” said Carrie Brogoitti, public health administrator for the CHD. “People need to understand the danger of taking non-prescribed medications and the severe danger in taking any medication that has not been prescribed to you by a health care provider and obtained from a legitimate pharmacy.”

“Unfortunately, many have turned to medications like opioids to cope with rising mental health challenges compounded by isolation due to the (COVID-19) pandemic,” said Aaron Grigg, mental health director at the center. “Opioids kill. We have tragically witnessed many overdoses in our own community and the flood of counterfeit pills with fentanyl has killed people right here in Union County.”

One of the most important tools in preventing unintentional overdose deaths is a medication called naloxone, also known under the brand names Narcan and Evzio, which temporarily blocks the toxic effects of opioids, or “reverses” an opioid overdose. The CHD has naloxone kits available for free.

“The naloxone CHD has distributed has literally saved lives,” according to police and the CHD. “Call us to get naloxone, or go to

your pharmacy so you can always have it on hand. It is also important to be aware that treating fentanyl overdoses often requires additional naloxone to reverse the effects of the drug. More doses of naloxone are sometimes needed to reverse fentanyl overdoses, compared to other opioid overdoses, due to the potency of fentanyl.”

Diversion programs such as naloxone distribution not only save lives from overdoses, but lead to treatment.

The center urges anyone who needs help with drug addiction to call it at 541-962-8800. Crisis resources are available 24/7. If an overdose is suspected, 911 should be called immediately to obtain medical assistance.

## Signs and symptoms of an overdose

You can identify an opioid overdose by a combination of three symptoms known as the “opioid triad.” The triad consists of:

- Pinpoint pupils.
- Unconsciousness.
- Respiratory depression.

Additional signs and symptoms of an opioid overdose include:

- Unresponsiveness.
- Awake, but unable to talk.
- Body is very limp.
- Face is pale or clammy.
- Blue lips, fingernails and skin.
- For lighter skinned people, the skin tone turns bluish purple; for darker skinned people, the skin tone turns

grayish or ashen.

- Breathing is slow and shallow, irregular or has stopped.

- Pulse is slow, erratic or not there at all.

- Choking sounds or a snore-like gurgling noise (sometimes called the “death-rattle”).

- Vomiting.

## Steps to take for opioid overdose victims

1. Call 911 immediately, report a drug overdose and give the street address and location of the victim. If there are other people available, send someone to wait in the street for the ambulance and guide the emergency medical technicians to the victim.

2. Try to rouse the victim by speaking loudly, pinching or rubbing your knuckles vigorously up and down the sternum (the bony part in the middle of the chest).

3. Make sure the victim is breathing. If not, administer rescue breathing (mouth-to-mouth) by pinching the victim’s nose shut and blowing into the mouth. Lay the victim on their side after they have resumed breathing on their own.

4. Administer naloxone, an opioid antagonist, if you have it and know how to use it.

5. Stay with the victim until help arrives, and act quickly to administer rescue breathing if they stop breathing. Encourage the victim to cooperate with the ambulance crew.



Ellen Morris Bishop/For the Wallowa County Chieftain

Search and rescue team members and trainees learn techniques for carrying a Stokes litter and “rescuing” SAR volunteer Kim Braatz on Sunday, April 25, 2021, at the Mount Emily Recreation Area near La Grande. The exercise was part of the field day training and required for certification for the nearly 25 new members.

## Counties certify new Search and Rescue team members

Union, Umatilla and Wallowa welcome two dozen volunteers

By ELLEN MORRIS BISHOP

For the Wallowa County Chieftain

LA GRANDE — The search and rescue teams from Union, Umatilla and Wallowa counties gained almost 25 newly certified members this week following two weekends of training and practice held in La Grande and at the Mount Emily Recreation Area.

Wallowa County Sheriff’s Search and Rescue members and the Union County and Umatilla County Sheriff’s collectively added more than a dozen to their certified teams. All SAR members are volunteers.

The training, led by Union County SAR Coordinator Nick Vora, included instruction and practice in basic survival, map reading and navigating, knot tying, communications, tracking and understanding the behavior of people

who were lost. The field exercises included demonstrations of search techniques and team coordination during rescues.

Experienced volunteers from Union, Umatilla and Wallowa counties’ SAR units provided instruction and coaching for the training.

“The instructors all are a wealth of knowledge and this is an amazing team. I am proud to be a part of it,” said new Wallowa County SAR team member Jennifer Harmon.

The newly-certified SAR members bring a variety of skills to the already-robust organizations, including nursing and radio communications, as well as expert skiing and back-country experience.

“It’s a great organization of dedicated volunteers,” Wallowa County SAR Training Coordinator Jim Akenson said. “The new members will make it even better.”

The new cohort brings the total number of Wallowa County SAR volunteers to about 50, he said.

“That’s pretty extraordinary for a small community,” Akenson said.

## Oregon House passes bills to change policing

By PETER WONG  
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Five bills aimed at changing policing practices, plus four related measures, have cleared the Oregon House by near-unanimous votes.

All the bills go to the Senate. Five other policing bills, which are likely to affect state agencies, are pending in the Legislature’s joint budget committee.

All emerged from the Judiciary Committee and a subcommittee focused on policing. It follows up the work of a 2020 special session called by Gov. Kate Brown after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis last year. A former officer was convicted last week on charges of murder and manslaughter; three other officers are awaiting trial. Floyd’s death touched off nationwide protests for racial justice, among them more than 100 nights in Portland.

Rep. Janelle Bynum, a Democrat from Clackamas who leads the full committee and the subcommittee, said lawmakers heard from local governments and associations of police executives and rank-and-file officers, not just groups advocating sweeping change.

“I want to make it clear this was not an opportunity to dig in and bash,” Bynum, who is Black, said. “It was an opportunity to create a community table, where people around the state had

a chance to have some input on who protects them and their communities.”

Rep. Ron Noble, a Republican from McMinnville, a former police chief of that city and a former officer in Corvallis, said all the bills should be considered in context — not individually. He made his comments while speaking about House Bill 2929, which requires police to report misconduct by officers or violations of standards.

“This bill by itself won’t do anything,” Noble said. “This bill, combined with the others that are coming before you, will create the ability and the safety for police officers to speak out when others act inappropriately, use excessive force, or just generally are unfit for the job.”

Bynum spoke about the experience of Elijah Warren, who emerged from his home in East Portland to talk to police about the effects on his family of tear gas they used to disperse a demonstration on Sept. 5. While he did so, an officer struck him on the ear with a baton. The officer was found later to have been identified in other incidents of excessive force.

“Had officers not intervened, Mr. Warren could have been hurt much worse,” Bynum said. “Had other officers reported the other officer’s misconduct earlier, Mr. Warren may never have been struck.”

Bynum said the city

of Portland, as far as she knows, has not responded as to whether the officer was disciplined.

“What we do know from reporting is that when officers do not intervene to stop their colleagues’ misconduct, it allows law enforcement to act with impunity,” she said. “Whether it is before, during or after an incident, that is wrong.”

House Bill 2929 passed, 58-0. It specifies who should receive reports of misconduct or violations (supervisors), when they should start investigations (72 hours), and when they should be completed (three months). If there is substantial evidence to support them, reports must be filed with the state Department of Public Safety Standards and Training.

## Other bills

Listed below are summaries of the other bills and their votes, starting with four others in the official package:

- House Bill 2513, 58-0: Police must have training in child and adult cardiopulmonary resuscitation, plus training at the public safety academy about airway and circulatory anatomy and physiology. Police also are required to summon emergency medical services if “tactically feasible” and have access to communications.

Rep. Dacia Grayber, D-Portland, is a Tualatin Valley Fire & Rescue fire-

fighter who sponsored that bill. She credited the idea to Tigard Mayor Jason Snider, himself a certified paramedic and general surgery administrator for Kaiser Permanente Northwest.

- House Bill 2936, 54-4: The state must investigate the backgrounds of potential officers — including financial and psychological information, and ties with racism or racist organizations — who attend the public safety academy in Salem. Police agencies must set standards for speech and expression by officers on and off the job.

- House Bill 3059, 58-0: Police authority to disperse “unlawful assemblies” is modified, so that if there are arrests, police must make them based on actual crimes, not simply for failure to disperse. Bynum said, “This simple clarification allows a declaration of unlawful assembly to be used as more of a tool to prevent a disaster or mitigate harm to people or damage to property.”

- House Bill 3355, 58-0: Police assigned to work crowd management in cities over 150,000 (Portland, Eugene, Salem) must wear identification — either a name or number — and outerwear that signifies the officer’s jurisdiction, such as “police” or “sheriff.” Noble said, “I suggest that this bill, along with what we will see forthcoming, work together to ensure a safe environment for those who are protesting.”

## IN BRIEF

### Oregon OKs resumption of J & J vaccine

SALEM — Health care providers in Oregon may continue to administer the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, as long as they can ensure that patients or their caregivers are informed about the benefits and risks in their primary language.

The Oregon Health Authority issued that guidance over the weekend after a safety review. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Adminis-

tration lifted the pause on delivering the vaccine on Friday, April 23, saying the risk of blood clots is extremely small.

The Western States Scientific Safety Review Workgroup found that the Johnson & Johnson vaccine is “generally safe and effective and that the resumption of its use is warranted once culturally and linguistically appropriate patient and provider educational materials in plain language that support informed decision-making are available.”

There are over 100,000 doses of Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine stored at vaccination sites in Oregon.

— Chieftain staff

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**SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY**  
The Wallowa County Fair Board Scholarship(s) will provide scholarship assistance to Wallowa County 4-H/FFA members. Applications are available from the Fair office for graduating high school students who will be attending college, vocational or trade school during the 2021 – 2022 school year.  
Amounts will range from \$250 to \$1000.  
Applications are available and can be picked up at the Wallowa County Fair office or e-mailed to you from [wallowacountyfair@gmail.com](mailto:wallowacountyfair@gmail.com).  
Candidates must submit the following by May 15, 2021  
1. Completed and signed application.  
2. High school transcript or statement of GPA from Registrar.  
3. Three letters of reference with one being advisor or leader.

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