



## Return of 'bath salts,' now illegal, surprises some

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Author: Laurie Rich Salerno

Record-Journal staff

WALLINGFORD - Though police say the 22 young people sent to hospitals for alcohol and drug overdoses at a concert Friday night could have been taking a variety of substances, the arrest of a man at the show charged with dealing "bath salts" along with LSD surprised some in town.

Rich Figlewski, owner of the Dry Dock, a sober cafe in Wallingford, said that though "bath salts," an amphetaminelike substance that emerged in the state in 2010, had gained popularity in the last few years, he thought local use had declined after state and federal efforts to make it a controlled substance, along with synthetic marijuana products called spice or K2.

"I haven't seen bath salts at any convenience store in a while," Figlewski said. "When I started hearing about it, looking at it, there were places that had it right out in the open."

The drug called "bath salts" has no chemical resemblance to something one might add to bath water. It is a drug made from synthetic cathinones, made primarily by small manufacturers to induce a combination speed and LSD-like high. Before the Connecticut legislature made it a schedule 1 controlled substance in October 2011, the drug was legally sold at gas stations, head shops and convenience stores in the form of a white powder or pill that is eaten, snorted, injected or smoked. A schedule 1 drug has no medical use and a high potential for abuse.

The drug has gotten media attention throughout the nation for inducing bizarre and sometimes violent reactions in users. In 2010 in Louisiana, a 21-year-old cut his own throat and then a day later shot himself to death after using the drug; in 2011, a man in Arizona burned his 5-year-old son's hand for touching his Bible, believing he was being stalked by demons and the child touching the book would remove the power from it; and in June in Utica, N.Y., a woman was taken in by police for running naked from the waist up through traffic and foaming at the mouth. She reportedly said her clothes were electrocuting her.

"Bath salts seem to have a disturbing potential for causing bizarre and violent behavior even against family members," said Bud Sangalli, director of the Connecticut Poison Control Center.

Individuals and mostly hospitals call the center when they need guidance in treating patients who are high on the drug, he said.

From the data Sangalli has collected, he said the age range of users in the state is between late teens and mid-40s, while LSD users tend to be in their late teens and early 20s.

Since gaining popularity in late 2010 in Connecticut, Poison Control has received one to two dozen calls about the drug each year, Sangalli said. But many hospitals do not call if they've become familiar with how to treat patients. So far in 2012, there have been 11 calls to Poison Control about bath salts, and 6 or 7 for LSD, he said.

Sangalli said that like any drug, bath salts can have lasting effects. With abuse there is a risk of seizures and

coma, and the drug can affect the heart and other organs. There's also a risk of dependence, he said.

Lt. Marc Mikulski, the Wallingford police spokesman, said police have worked hard to keep the drug off the shelves locally, with narcotics officers meeting with every retailer in town that might sell them or may have previously sold them to explain that they're now illegal.

Mikulski said the department has seen some bath salts use in town in the last few years.

"We have seen it out there, not in a great abundance, but it is out there. All our officers are trained for what to look for," Mikulski said. "We're just happy that we haven't had any tragedies."

Isalerno@record-journal.com (203) 317-2235 Twitter: @LaurieSalernoRJ

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**Section:** From Page 1

**Page:** 06

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