



INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

PCP: Increasing Availability and Abuse

Product No. 2004-L0424-002

SEPTEMBER 2004

U. S. D E P A R T M E N T O F J U S T I C E

DEA and Maine Drug Enforcement Agency



Law enforcement, seizure, and treatment data indicate that PCP (phencyclidine) availability and abuse are increasing in some areas of the country, particularly in metropolitan areas. Primarily produced by street gangs and criminal groups operating in California, the drug is distributed and abused throughout the country. Law enforcement agencies report that PCP is rising in popularity among adolescents and young adults. Though considered a minor threat in comparison with other illicit drugs, the rising availability and abuse of PCP pose a growing threat to the United States.

Background

PCP was first synthesized in 1926 and was patented and marketed as a Schedule III surgical analgesic and anesthetic in 1963. Adverse side effects associated with the drug—including delusion, agitation, and confusion—caused it to be withdrawn from the market in 1965. PCP was then marketed as a veterinary anesthetic and tranquilizer

in 1967. In 1978 PCP was transferred from Schedule III to Schedule II of the Controlled Substances Act of 1970 due to reported increases in abuse.

Abuse

PCP abuse appears to be increasing, particularly in metropolitan areas. According to the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), the estimated number of emergency department (ED) mentions for PCP rose steadily each year from 3,663 mentions in 1999 to 7,648 mentions in 2002. Among DAWN reporting cities, ED mentions for PCP were highest in Washington, D.C., (1,302), Philadelphia (1,144), and Los Angeles (991). In the same year, the Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG) reported that indicators increased in five areas—Los Angeles, Philadelphia, Phoenix, Texas, and Washington, D.C. According to the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS), the number of PCP-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities nationwide increased from 2,210 admissions in 1999 to 3,866 admissions in 2002.

The effects of PCP vary, depending on the dose. Low to moderate doses of 1 to 5 milligrams cause feelings of detachment, slurred speech, loss of coordination, and rapid eye movement. Higher doses (10 mg or more) produce illusions and auditory hallucinations. PCP users may also have feelings of strength, anxiety, aggression, and hostility and may experience delusions, paranoia, and catatonia.

PCP-Laced Cigarettes, Cigars, and Marijuana

Smoking tobacco products or marijuana dipped in liquid PCP remains popular among some young adults, according to state and local law enforcement reporting. In 2003 PCP-laced cigarettes, cigars, and marijuana joints were noted in Arkansas, California, Maryland, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The cost reportedly ranges from \$5 to \$30 each.

PCP is available in powder, crystal, tablet, capsule, and liquid forms and is either injected, snorted, swallowed, or smoked by applying liquid PCP to leafy materials such as tobacco, marijuana, parsley, mint, and oregano. Powdered or crystal PCP also is smoked when mixed with marijuana or tobacco. Street names for the drug include angel dust, buck-naked, dippers, embalming fluid, killer weed, love boat, super grass, and rocket fuel.

Availability

Although law enforcement reporting indicates that PCP availability is increasing in metropolitan areas, National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) 2004 data reveal that 60.8 percent of agencies report that PCP availability is low and that approximately one-quarter of the respondents (25.2%) indicate that PCP is not available in their areas. Law enforcement reporting indicates that PCP is increasingly available or resurgent in metropolitan areas such as Baltimore, Chicago, Dallas, Houston, New York, Philadelphia, and Washington, D.C.

STRIDE PCP Seizures, 2000–2003

Year	Dosage Units
2000	184,938
2001	1,037,574
2002	6,030,545
2003	3,592,827

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

According to Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) System to Retrieve Information From Drug Evidence (STRIDE) data, nationwide seizure amounts increased significantly between 2000 and 2002 before decreasing in 2003.

Wholesale and retail prices of PCP are relatively low in comparison with other illicit drugs. Gallon quantities of liquid PCP sell at the wholesale level for \$6,500 to \$8,000 in Los Angeles and \$12,000 to \$20,000 in New York City. At the retail level, PCP-laced cigarettes and joints reportedly sell for \$5 to \$30 each. The tablet form of PCP sells for \$20 to \$30 per tablet; PCP in powder form sells for \$20 to \$30 per gram; and liquid PCP sells for \$125 to \$600 per ounce.

PCP Tablets



Photo courtesy of Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation, Orlando FL

Tablets composed partially or entirely of PCP—as revealed by laboratory analysis—but sometimes sold as MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) are being distributed in the United States. Law enforcement reporting indicates that over the past 3 years, tablets containing PCP have been seized in Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Maryland, New York, Ohio, Virginia, and Washington, D.C.

Estimated PCP Prices, Nationwide, 2003

Wholesale	
Liquid	\$6,500-\$28,000/gallon
Retail	
PCP-laced cigarette/joint	\$5-\$30
Powder	\$20-\$30/g
Tablet	\$20-\$30/tablet
Liquid	\$125-\$600/oz

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

Production, Transportation, and Distribution

The chemicals required to illicitly produce PCP are readily available and inexpensive, and the production process does not require much knowledge of chemistry or laboratory equipment. Liquid PCP commonly is produced using a technique called the bucket method, in which chemicals are mixed in a bucket or trash can. Although it is a relatively simple method, the chemicals used to produce the drug are toxic and highly flammable. Piperidine, a PCP precursor, commonly is found at laboratory sites. Other chemicals may include bromobenzene, ether, hydrochloric acid, and potassium cyanide. Most PCP contains contaminants from its makeshift manufacture, resulting in a color ranging from tan to brown.

Laboratory seizure data and law enforcement reporting indicate that PCP production is limited and controlled predominantly by members of African American gangs, primarily Bloods and Crips, and criminal groups operating in California. DEA El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System (NCLSS) data indicate that of the 22 clandestine laboratories seized in the United States from 2000 through 2003, 18 were located in California. Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and independent operators also produce PCP in the United States, although to a lesser extent.

Street Gangs Traffic PCP

Street gangs, primarily Bloods and Crips, are involved in the production, transportation, and distribution of PCP in the United States. These gangs, composed primarily of African American males, operate principally in the Los Angeles metropolitan area but are also present in several areas of the country, including the West Central, Pacific, and Southeast regions. Bloods and Crips distribute PCP and other illicit drugs and are involved in many other types of criminal activity, including assault, homicide, extortion, and robbery.

Produced primarily for domestic distribution, PCP is transported by package delivery services and in private vehicles, buses, and commercial aircraft to distribution centers including Baltimore, Chicago, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, New Orleans, and Washington, D.C. Law enforcement reporting indicates that PCP produced in southern California is transported in private vehicles or by couriers aboard passenger trains to states such as Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Pennsylvania for retail distribution. In many instances, couriers attempt to conceal the amber-colored PCP in plastic shampoo, sports drink, gasoline, or mouthwash containers and glass whiskey, vinegar, or cleaning solution bottles. PCP is supplied to gang members and independent dealers for retail distribution from private residences and public housing projects. Retail-level distributors typically sell PCP at open-air markets in inner cities, on college campuses, and at raves.

Liquid PCP Transport Methods



NDIC

Liquid PCP is transported from producers to distributors in a variety of glass and plastic containers. Typically producers sell liquid PCP to wholesale distributors in containers ranging in size from gallon jugs to soda bottles. Wholesale distributors usually transfer the drug to smaller containers, such as vanilla extract bottles and glass vials, for distribution at the retail level.

California: On September 4, 2003, DEA announced the indictment of 28 individuals in the Central District of California on charges related to the illicit production and distribution of PCP. According to the indictments, between April 2001 and March 2003 the defendants, who were members of a Los Angeles-based criminal group,

produced PCP in clandestine laboratories located in the Los Angeles area. During the investigation, investigators seized two operational PCP laboratories capable of producing 50 to 200 gallons of PCP, one nonoperational PCP laboratory, 10 gallons of PCP, chemicals used in manufacturing PCP (ether, pyridine, and piperidine), \$120,000, and six firearms. The criminal group sold PCP to distributors in areas of the United States including California and Houston.

Connecticut: A joint investigation conducted by the Connecticut State Police, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), Hartford Police Department, and Willimantic Police Department resulted in the November 20, 2002, arrests of 11 individuals for transporting gallon quantities of PCP from New York City to Hartford. Several arrestees were members of an African American criminal group operating from public housing complexes in Hartford's North End. These arrestees traveled in private vehicles to the Harlem section of New York City two to three times per month to purchase 1 to 2 gallons of PCP for \$300 per liquid ounce from two Belizean nationals. The arrestees transported the PCP to Hartford in 32-ounce plastic or glass bottles and resold the drug for \$600 per liquid ounce in the Hartford area. The arrestees also soaked marijuana and mint leaves in liquid PCP and distributed the combination for \$10 to \$20 per gram. Following the arrests, searches by law enforcement officers yielded 1 gallon of liquid PCP, 30 grams of PCP-soaked mint leaves, \$16,000 in cash, and 2 handguns. In addition, 1 kilogram of heroin was seized from the Belizean nationals who had recently begun to distribute that drug in New York City.

Florida: Officials from the Orlando Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation (MBI) and DEA report that tablets sold as MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine, also known as ecstasy) in the Orlando area were in fact PCP. On September 9, 2003, agents purchased 500 tablets from two men in

Pine Hills, a west Orlando neighborhood, who told the agents that they were ecstasy tablets. The agents arrested the men. A search of their vehicle resulted in the seizure of 150 additional tablets, 5 ounces of powdered cocaine, and a loaded handgun. The agents submitted the tablets to a crime laboratory for analysis. The laboratory reported that the 500 blue tablets—marked with a single score on one side and an elevated cross on the other side—contained PCP as their only active ingredient. The laboratory also reported that another 100 green tablets with similar markings also were PCP tablets. The remaining 50 tablets—yellow and marked with a yin-yang symbol—reportedly contained MDA (3,4-methylenedioxyamphetamine) and methamphetamine. Both suspects were charged with trafficking PCP and MDA, possession of a firearm by a convicted felon, and possession of cocaine with intent to deliver. One of the suspects was a member of the Latin Kings gang. The other suspect had no known gang affiliation and is believed to be from Virginia.

Florida: On June 5, 2003, the U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Florida announced the arrest and indictment of three individuals for conspiracy to possess a listed chemical used to manufacture PCP and for possession of listed chemicals. DEA agents arranged a “buy-bust” operation, and the defendants were arrested on June 2, 2003, at a parking lot in Tampa after they had purchased 3 gallons of piperidine for \$3,900 from case agents. Information collected after the defendants’ arrest led DEA agents to search a residence rented by one of the defendants. In the residence, agents discovered a laboratory used to produce PCP, 24 gallons of cyclohexanone, 60 pounds of sodium cyanide, 100 pounds of sodium metabisulfate, and 24 gallons of bromobenzene—chemicals used in the production of PCP. Agents also seized 120 grams of powdered PCP prepackaged for retail distribution. According to DEA, this is believed to be the largest PCP laboratory ever seized in the state.

Illinois: The Illinois State Police Forensic Science Center in Chicago received two submissions containing a total of 55 lollipops that were suspected of containing a controlled substance—possibly MDMA, THC, or GHB. The lollipops were being sold on the West Side of Chicago and were seized by the Chicago Police Department in January 2004. Analysis was prioritized because the items were apparently being marketed to children. Each lollipop weighed approximately 10 grams, was green, red, or amber in color, and was in the shape of a maple leaf or a face resembling Santa Claus. No visible plant material was observed; however, a crushed portion tested positive for tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). Further analysis indicated a mixture of THC and PCP. This was the laboratory's first submission of this type.

Maryland: The DEA Mid-Atlantic Laboratory in Largo received 198 blue tablets suspected to be MDMA with a cross logo on one side and a single score mark on the other. The tablets were recovered in January 2004 from a laboratory that produced methamphetamine using the iodine-red phosphorus method in Waldorf. (Waldorf is about 20 miles south-southwest of Washington, D.C.) The tablets were round, biconvex, approximately 10 millimeters in diameter, and weighed 256 milligrams each. Analysis indicated not MDMA but rather PCP (0.38 milligrams/tablet). This was the first submission to the laboratory of suspected MDMA tablets containing only PCP. There was no indication that PCP was being produced at the clandestine laboratory.

Maryland: On November 20, 2002, the Baltimore City Police Department seized a PCP laboratory operating in a residential neighborhood of the city. Baltimore City officers, along with agents from DEA, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), and the Maryland Department of the Environment, confiscated 30 gallons of liquid PCP and 180 gallons of precursor chemicals from the basement of a private residence. Sections of the city were cordoned off because of the explosive nature of the chemicals.

Missouri: On October 30, 2002, an Oklahoma Highway Patrol officer seized thirty-two 16-ounce bottles of PCP (approximately 61,000 doses) from a vehicle that had been traveling north on Interstate 35 near Blackwell. The officer stopped the vehicle for speeding and obtained the driver's consent to search the vehicle. During the search a drug-detection canine alerted to drugs in the dashboard area. After the canine alert, the driver told the officer that her boyfriend had smoked marijuana in the car. The trooper continued to search the vehicle and discovered bottles of PCP concealed in a hidden compartment that extended the entire length of the dash. In a subsequent interview the driver stated that she was driving from California to St. Louis, Missouri.

Missouri: On July 1, 2002, the Kansas City Police Department Gang Squad seized three-quarters of a gallon of PCP and arrested two males who had attempted to sell the PCP to an undercover officer for \$16,000. During undercover negotiations with the suspects, squad officers requested to purchase only 1 ounce of PCP. The suspects misunderstood the request and arrived with three-quarters of a gallon. The suspects—local residents of the Kansas City area—had obtained the PCP from sources in Los Angeles, California. In November 2001 officers had seized 11 gallons of PCP from an associate of the two men.

Ohio: The Grand Junction Police Department Laboratory in Colorado received two 1-gallon jugs marked Gatorade that contained an orange liquid suspected to be PCP. The jugs were located in a black cloth suitcase seized by the Grand Valley Joint Drug Task Force at the Grand Junction Greyhound bus station in January 2003. The two suspects involved were traveling from Compton, California, to Cincinnati, Ohio. Passive evaporation of the liquids reduced their volume by about two-thirds. Analysis of the final solution confirmed fairly clean phencyclidine base. The easily evaporated solvent was petroleum ether. The laboratory had received phencyclidine base samples seized at the bus station on two occasions, but not in these quantities.

Oklahoma: On February 27, 2004, an Oklahoma Highway Patrol interdiction unit seized 1 gallon of liquid PCP during a routine traffic stop on I-40 in Custer County. According to officials, the troopers stopped a pickup truck for speeding. During identification checks of the occupants, the troopers noticed that both the driver and the passenger appeared to be extremely nervous and provided conflicting information about the nature of their travel. During the course of a drug-detection canine search, the passenger threw a partially smoked cigarette out of the passenger window. The drug-detection canine alerted to the cigarette—which field-tested positive for marijuana. A subsequent search of the vehicle revealed 1 gallon of suspected PCP hidden in a compartment located behind the firewall. The driver, a 38-year-old male from Phoenix, and the passenger, a 25-year-old female from Tolleson (AZ), were arrested and charged with trafficking and possession of a controlled substance. The PCP was believed to be destined for Oklahoma City or Tulsa.

Oklahoma: On September 24, 2002, New Mexico State Police officers seized 2 gallons of liquid PCP from a rental vehicle traveling east on I-40, a major west-east interstate from Barstow, California, to Wilmington, North Carolina. They arrested the driver, a 20-year-old resident of California. Officers had stopped the vehicle for speeding and discovered the PCP during a consensual search. The PCP was found in a cooler in the trunk of the vehicle, concealed in four grape juice containers. New Mexico officials report that this is one of the largest PCP seizures in the state's history. Reports indicate that the drug was intended for distribution in Oklahoma.

Pennsylvania: On June 11, 2004, an Oklahoma Highway Patrol Interdiction Team seized 7 gallons of PCP and 10 kilograms of cocaine from a rented 2004 Mercury sport-utility vehicle (SUV) during a traffic stop on the Turner Turnpike (I-44). The driver stated that the load had originated in Compton, California, and was destined for

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After a drug-detection canine alerted to the vehicle, it was examined and 7 gallons of PCP and 10 kilograms of cocaine were found in the rear of the vehicle. The PCP was concealed in an ice chest in three 2-gallon plastic gas containers and three plastic bottles weighing approximately 20 ounces each. The liquid in all the containers field-tested positive for PCP. The cocaine was wrapped in brown tape bundles weighing approximately 1 kilogram each. Two of the bundles were found wrapped in a pair of pants and the other eight were found in two shoeboxes. The bundles field-tested positive for cocaine. Both the driver and passenger were arrested.

Texas: On August 26, 2003, 10 individuals were indicted in the Southern District of Texas after investigators from the DEA Houston Division, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), Texas Department of Public Safety, and Harris County Sheriff's Department established that the individuals were distributing PCP produced by a southern California criminal group.

Washington, D.C.: On March 15, 2004, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, FBI, DEA, and District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Department (MPDC) announced the indictment of 26 individuals on numerous federal charges including conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, primarily PCP. According to the indictment, since March 2002 two New York men had directed the conspiracy by arranging for PCP to be shipped via mail services, private vehicles, and commercial airlines from California to Washington, D.C. Upon obtaining the PCP, defendants located in Washington, D.C., distributed the drug in the Northeast section of the city around 18th and M Streets. The defendants sold liquid PCP, as well as crack cocaine and MDMA, to individuals from the city as well as to Maryland and Virginia residents who traveled into the city to purchase the drugs. Prior to the announcement of the indictments, law enforcement officers executed search warrants in at least 25 locations in Washington,

D.C., Maryland, Virginia, New York, and Georgia. The searches resulted in the seizure of 1 gallon of PCP, 17 firearms, and approximately \$100,000 in cash. Twenty of the defendants have been arrested; six remain fugitives. The indictments were the result of a long-term investigation conducted by a joint FBI/MPDC task force targeting gang activity in the District of Columbia.

Washington, D.C.: On March 12, 2003, Junction City Police Department officers seized approximately 1 gallon of liquid PCP from a van traveling east on I-70 through Kansas. The officer stopped the van for a moving violation but became suspicious when the female operator provided conflicting information regarding her travel route. The officer requested consent to search the van but was refused by the operator. The officer then called a Kansas Highway Patrol drug-detection canine unit to the scene. A drug-detection canine alerted to the door panel on the driver's side of the vehicle, where officers subsequently discovered suspected marijuana residue. The officers then conducted a search of the inside of the van and a cooler containing ice, bottles of water, and two plastic apple juice bottles. The officers noticed that the seals of the apple juice bottles were broken and that their contents had a strong odor. DEA agents responded to the scene, conducted a field analysis of the liquid, and confirmed that the liquid inside the apple juice bottles was PCP. The operator and

her three companions were arrested on federal charges of possessing a controlled substance with the intent to distribute. Three of the defendants are from the Washington, D.C., area and one is from Rhode Island. Law enforcement authorities believe that the individuals obtained the PCP in Los Angeles and were returning to Washington, D.C.

Outlook

The availability of PCP will continue to increase due to relatively simple production techniques and increasing demand. Abuse will remain most prevalent in large metropolitan areas, although an increase in abuse in suburbs and smaller communities that have increasing street gang activity is probable. PCP will remain predominantly a street drug, and there is no indication that its use is likely to become widespread at nightclubs or raves. Easy accessibility and relatively low costs associated with the production and sale of PCP will continue to attract new users—particularly among adolescents and young adults—and will continue to be a problem in the United States. PCP will continue to be produced primarily in metropolitan areas by African American gangs and criminal groups. PCP will remain a growing concern to law enforcement agencies in the United States due to the recent surge in abuse and availability and the growing popularity of the drug.

Sources

State

Arizona

Chandler Police Department

Arkansas

Arkansas State Police
Hot Springs Police Department
Pulaski County Sheriff's Office

California

Belmont Police Department
Hayward Police Department
Los Angeles Police Department
Orange County Sheriff's Department
Pomona Police Department
San Bernardino Police Department
San Mateo County Narcotics Task Force

Colorado

Denver Police Department
Grand Junction Police Department
Grand Valley Joint Drug Task Force

Connecticut

Connecticut State Police
Hartford Police Department
Willimantic Police Department

District of Columbia

Metropolitan Police Department

Florida

Florida Department of Law Enforcement
Orlando Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation

Georgia

Muscogee County Sheriff's Office

Illinois

Chicago Police Department
Illinois State Police Forensic Science Center at Chicago

Kansas

Junction City Police Department
Kansas Highway Patrol

Louisiana

Lake Charles Police Department
Saint Landry Parish Sheriff's Office

Maryland

Baltimore City Police Department
Calvert County Substance Abuse Program
Charles County Substance Abuse Services
Howard County Police Department
Rockdale Police Department
St. Mary's County Sheriff's Office

Missouri

Columbia Police Department
Kansas City Police Department
Missouri State Highway Patrol
St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department

Nebraska

Nebraska State Patrol

New Jersey

Hudson County Narcotics Task Force
Manchester Township Police Department
New Brunswick Police Department
Salem County Prosecutor's Office

New Mexico

New Mexico State Police

New York

Fulton Police Department
New York City Police Department
New York State Police
Division of State Police

Oklahoma

Oklahoma Highway Patrol

Texas

Garland County Sheriff's Office
Harris County Sheriff's Department
Rockdale Police Department
Texas Department of Public Safety
Waco Police Department

Virginia

Fairfax County Police Department
Manassas City Police Department
Virginia Baptist Hospital
Pathways Treatment Center

Federal

Executive Office of the President

- Office of National Drug Control Policy
 - High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas
 - Chicago
 - Houston
 - Philadelphia/Camden
 - Rocky Mountain
 - Washington, D.C., HIDTA Group

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- National Institutes of Health
 - National Institute on Drug Abuse
 - Community Epidemiology Work Group
 - Monitoring the Future
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
 - Office of Applied Studies
 - Drug Abuse Warning Network
 - National Survey on Drug Use and Health
 - Treatment Episode Data Set

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

- U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

U.S. Department of Justice

- Drug Enforcement Administration
 - Chicago Division
 - Dallas Division
 - El Paso Intelligence Center
 - National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System
 - Houston Division
 - Mid-Atlantic Laboratory
 - Philadelphia Division
 - System to Retrieve Information From Drug Evidence
 - Washington, D.C., Division

Federal Bureau of Investigation

U.S. Attorney's Office

- District of Columbia
- Middle District of Florida
- Southern District of Texas

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