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DATE: September 27, 2016  
TO: ORANGE COUNTY EMS DISTRIBUTION LIST  
FROM: Philip J. Froman, MD, FACEP   
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**SUBJECT: RISK OF CARFENTANIL EXPOSURE TO FIRST RESPONDER**

This notice is to alert the Orange County EMS system of the following:

There is a current Fentanyl epidemic in the United States and it poses a risk to First Responders. Included in this correspondence is the **DEA Officer Safety Alert** memo dated 09/22/16 discussing the risk of the large animal tranquilizer, Carfentanil.

Carfentanil is synthetic opioid approximately 10,000 times more potent than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl. Important points to remember are:

- All providers must use extreme caution with suspected illegal opioids because of the potential risks of inhalation and/or absorption.
- All Law Enforcement and EMS providers must know the signs and symptoms of acute opioid overdose.
- Seek immediate care for opioid exposure symptoms; administer naloxone at the first signs of systemic exposure (respiratory depression, altered level of consciousness), multiple doses of naloxone may be required to reverse Carfentanil affects.
- Remember that Carfentanil can resemble powdered cocaine or heroin or be in tablet form.

Please contact the Orange County EMS Agency at 714-834-5034 for any questions or needed clarification of risks or possible approaches to Carfentanil exposures.

## **DEA Issues Carfentanil Warning to Police and Public**

*Dangerous opioid 10,000 times more potent than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl*

**SEP 22 (WASHINGTON)** - DEA has issued a public warning to the public and law enforcement nationwide about the health and safety risks of carfentanil. Carfentanil is a synthetic opioid that is 10,000 times more potent than morphine and 100 times more potent than fentanyl, which itself is 50 times more potent than heroin. DEA, local law enforcement and first responders have recently seen the presence of carfentanil, which has been linked to a significant number of overdose deaths in various parts of the country. Improper handling of carfentanil, as well as fentanyl and other fentanyl-related compounds, has deadly consequences.

“Carfentanil is surfacing in more and more communities.” said DEA Acting Administrator Chuck Rosenberg. “We see it on the streets, often disguised as heroin. It is crazy dangerous. Synthetics such as fentanyl and carfentanil can kill you. I hope our first responders – and the public – will read and heed our health and safety warning. These men and women have remarkably difficult jobs and we need them to be well and healthy.”

Carfentanil is a Schedule II substance under the Controlled Substances Act and is used as a tranquilizing agent for elephants and other large mammals. The lethal dose range for carfentanil in humans is unknown. However, as noted, carfentanil is approximately 100 times more potent than fentanyl, which can be lethal at the 2-milligram range, depending on route of administration and other factors.

Carfentanil and other fentanyl-related compounds are a serious danger to public safety, first responder, medical, treatment, and laboratory personnel. These substances can come in several forms, including powder, blotter paper, tablets, and spray – they can be absorbed through the skin or accidental inhalation of airborne powder. If encountered, responding personnel should do the following based on the specific situation:

**Exercise extreme caution.** Only properly trained and outfitted law enforcement professionals should handle any substance suspected to contain fentanyl or a fentanyl-related compound. If encountered, contact the appropriate officials within your agency.

**Be aware of any sign of exposure.** Symptoms include: respiratory depression or arrest, drowsiness, disorientation, sedation, pinpoint pupils, and clammy skin. The onset of these symptoms usually occurs within minutes of exposure.

**Seek IMMEDIATE medical attention.** Carfentanil and other fentanyl-related substances can work very quickly, so in cases of suspected exposure, it is important to call EMS immediately. If inhaled, move the victim to fresh air. If ingested and the victim is conscious, wash out the victim’s eyes and mouth with cool water.

**Be ready to administer naloxone in the event of exposure.** Naloxone is an antidote for opioid overdose. Immediately administering naloxone can reverse an overdose of carfentanil, fentanyl, or other opioids, although multiple doses of naloxone may be required. Continue to administer a dose of naloxone every 2-3 minutes until the individual is breathing on his/her own for at least 15 minutes or until EMS arrives.

**Remember that carfentanil can resemble powdered cocaine or heroin.** If you suspect the presence of carfentanil or any synthetic opioid, do not take samples or otherwise disturb the substance, as this could lead to accidental exposure. Rather, secure the substance and follow approved transportation procedures.