

marijuana epidemic



photo illustration by Alexis Maher, Renee Rubio, Sarah Ritze, and Shelly Weaver.

Teenagers across America have turned to smoking incense designed for a fireplace in lieu of marijuana. The drug, deemed "Spice," is extremely dangerous and will be outlawed after Dec. 24.

and cannabicyclohexanol.

"It's unwise and pretty dangerous," explained Chandler police officer, Scot Mackenzie. "You don't always know what's in it."

Easy to purchase

It has become increasingly simple to purchase these dangerous drugs. Smoke shops, commonly known as "headshops," sell everything from cigarettes to their "house blends." Spice has become the main mixture of choice for smoke shops.

Although it is not yet illegal, the ease in buying such a potentially dangerous form of synthetic marijuana is astounding. A simple flash of identification is the only obstacle a buyer faces when they step up to the counter.

The risks that go along with consuming Spice seem to be brushed off by smoke shop employees. "Have a good time smoking," a Gilbert smoke shop employee said as she wrapped a sale on Dec. 7, "because that stuff will get you messed up in the best way."

She said it with a smile on her face as though she were a jewelry store clerk who just sold another engagement ring.

Synthetic drugs are unbelievably potent and harsh on the body; the health dangers have become less important as the popularity of products grows each year.

Hallucinations, seizures, loss of vision, headaches, and anxiety are closely linked to synthetic drugs, but in most cases consumers are not educated on the risks but rather guided towards an array of products that will supposedly make them "feel good." As long as customers have anywhere from \$15 -25 they can purchase more or less than one gram of any substance smoke shops are willing to sell.

The controversy

The controversy distinctively lies in the legality and accessibility of Spice.

"For a long time, Spice was not illegal," says Mackenzie. When referring to punishment, "It would be up to the juvenile courts."

Coming to the US from China and Korea, Spice is difficult to regulate because it follows federal importation protocols. It is a product that store owners say is difficult to keep on their shelves.

Due to the damaging effects Spice has on the body, states

like Illinois, Louisiana, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Arkansas, Missouri and Ohio have passed legislation against the product.

The military forces has also prohibited servicemen from possessing or using Spice.

School districts are following the same trend. The Tempe Union High School District as well as Mesa Public

Schools are creating stiff penalties for students who possess it.

According to PHS Assistant Principal Heather Patterson, an estimated 10 students have been detected with Spice on campus.

Those caught will receive a nine-and-a-half day suspension, however the long term penalty may prove to be more fatal.

NOT INTENDED FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

Ingredient JWH-018 in Spice acts like marijuana substitute

