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## City takes first step to outlaw 'spice'

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Concerns over the potential danger of a synthetically-manufactured drug has led the city of Buffalo to draft an ordinance making the use and sale of the product in city limits illegal.

The substance – commonly known as spice, but marketed as Black Mamba, K2, Spice Gold, and Yucatan Fire– first sparked concern among civic leaders when an article in the Buffalo Bulletin caused Johnson County Substance Abuse Coordinator Bill Hawley to further investigate the matter.

"I first heard about it when Brian Schueler in the spring of this year called and was asking questions because he was working on a story about its popularity at the high school," Hawley said. "That was really the initial local sighting of this yet-to-be illegalized form of intoxicant."

But spice's status as legal might be short lived as Councilman Randy Dyess recently introduced an ordinance that would ban the product for use or sale in Buffalo.

"I started looking into it after attending a meeting where Bill Hawley brought some, I contacted the city attorney about drafting an ordinance and within a day he had one drafted from an ordinance used in Ogden, Utah," Dyess said. "We'll have to tweak it a little bit for Buffalo, but when I brought the draft up at the last council meeting I got a pretty good response."

Owing to the multiple market names, the product is listed in the ordinance by the chemicals used for its manufacture including JWH-018 a chemical also found in tree fertilizer.

"This is not stuff that you really want to be ingesting," Dyess said. "There are cases of kids smoking this stuff to get high and then ending up in the emergency room. We know that it is harmful and we need to pass legislation making it so that there's not the accessibility of the drug in the city of Buffalo. It's supposedly used to get a high similar to marijuana but it's pretty dangerous stuff."

Hawley said that it has been difficult gauging the popularity of the product with kids, but regardless, he is fully behind the efforts of the city.

"In my dealing with the high school kids it's tough to tell just how widespread use is," Hawley said. "From what I've dealt with about half of the students are aware of the substance and half of them are not."

Similar efforts have been taken in Cody to illegalize the product, and Dyess said that he hopes the proactive step by the council will help to keep it out of the hands of young adults.

"It's kind of against my operating procedure in that I normally don't think more regulation is the best thing, but this is different," Dyess said. "If we can keep one kid out of the hospital, that is way different than fining somebody because their grass is too tall."

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