

Mansfield judges spread awareness about MDPV bath salts, effects

James Pardue freely acknowledges he has abused many drugs.

But even he admits not being ready for the effects of bath salts.

"This has trumped everything that I've ever messed with," Pardue said. "Within a month's time, I've lost 60 pounds from not eating. I didn't sleep for three weeks."

Pardue, an inmate at the Richland County Jail, shared his story during a news conference Wednesday in Mansfield Municipal Court.

Judges Jerry Ault and Frank Ardis Jr. called the session to spread awareness about bath salts.

"We're here to talk about what has become, in our minds, an epidemic in the last three to six months," Ault said. "This is starting to become a crisis in our community."

Bath salts turned up locally in January in a product called Posh Aromatherapy. They contain methylenedioxypropylamphetamine -- MDPV -- a synthetic drug of which the main side effects include hallucinations and paranoia.

Several states have banned or are considering banning MDPV, which is sold under such other names as Blue Silk, TranQuility, White Lightning and White Horse. The substances are not really bath salts but are marketed that way. They are legal in Ohio.

The so-called bath salts look like ground-up heroin or cocaine and come in small, clear plastic containers. Some convenience stores sell them for \$20 to \$80. People snort, smoke or inject them.



A substance sold as concentrated bath salts, which is used as a drug, has been causing problems for law enforcement, two Mansfield judges said Wednesday. / Dave Polcyn/News Journal

"I've been doing this (career in law enforcement) for 32 years," Ault said. "This is so unusual. I think about half the people who use this and get in trouble are calling the police on themselves.

"I've never seen that happen."

Pardue, 24, did just that.

"I called the police on myself to seek help," he said. "I figured if I tried to stop on my own, it wouldn't happen."

Ashlie Lemaster, 25, and Pardue said bath salts are highly addictive. Both wound up in jail. They violated terms of their probation by not reporting to their probation officers.

Lemaster and Pardue said they were too paranoid to leave their homes. Lemaster became tearful as she shared her story.

"My mom, sister and grandmother had to witness me being unresponsive," she said. "I have a 5-year-old son. I can't imagine seeing him the way my mom and grandmother had to see me."

Pardue and Lemaster said their first few experiences with bath salts were positive, but they didn't last.

"It's bad stuff. It's really bad," Pardue said. "You completely lose your mind."

People under the influence of bath salts pose a problem for law enforcement because of their unpredictability. Last month, city police handled a call in which the suspects were holed up in their house with a rifle.

They told police they thought people were trying to break in. They fired a gunshot inside the residence with two babies present.

"What started as a routine emerging trend really got our attention when the use of this drug started to involve more violent outcomes," city police Chief Dino Sgambellone said.

Ault continued that thought.

"The paranoia that results ... somebody that messed up with a gun, who knows what might happen?" the judge asked. "It's the most frightening thing I've ever seen."

Jailers eventually deal with the abusers.

"We get inmates who are on this," Richland County sheriff's Capt. Joe Masi said. "They're more violent. What I'd say is they're out of their minds."

Masi said he has asked county commissioners for the money to buy two more restraint chairs to deal with the problem.

City police have been charging people with abusing harmful intoxicants as one way to deal with the issue.

"That still doesn't deal with getting rid of it," city law director Dave Remy said.

Remy said he is drafting legislation to ban the sale, possession or use of bath salts. It should be ready to present to city council next month.

"We'd be the first in the state to do it," Remy said.

Remy said the legislation would not cover unincorporated areas of the county, which would be affected only by a state statute.

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