

◆ Candy cocaine ◆ ◆ New flavor adds intensity to drug war

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The two Virginias are a magnet for the plague of drug abuse. It ◆s a sad and unfortunate statement, but a true one, nonetheless. Crack, cocaine, marijuana and a host of prescription drugs ◆ most notably OxyContin, which appears to be a favorite among users ◆ have ensnared addicts young and old, turning one-time good people into lifeless beings whose sole purpose seems to be begging, borrowing or stealing in order to get their next fix.

The war against this drug epidemic has been difficult ◆ for police, prosecutors, the public and innocent family members and friends of addicts. But progress has been made, and the fight continues.

Regrettably, reports surfaced this week of a new and escalating weapon in the arsenal of dealers of illegal drugs. One whose very design and concept makes it a particularly scary foe.

The enemy is not new ◆ cocaine and methamphetamine, both of which have been around for far too long. But now manufacturers of these drugs are adding a new twist to their products ◆ flavors such as strawberry, lemon, coconut and cinnamon.

Law enforcement officials have labeled this ◆ flavored ◆ or ◆ candy ◆ cocaine. We simply call it a new way to die.

Last month, the Drug Enforcement Administration made a substantial drug bust in California that included one and a half pounds of flavored cocaine (as well as huge amounts of regular cocaine, methamphetamine and, no surprise, weapons). And it appears the new flavored cocaine may be a designer product, of sorts, as the cost of this drug (sold to undercover agents) ranged from \$1,100 to \$1,400 per ounce, instead of the typical \$600 to \$700 per ounce price for regular cocaine, DEA press information notes.

◆ Court documents describe the ◆ strawberry ◆ flavored cocaine as pink in color, the ◆ cinnamon ◆ flavor an off-white/tan color, while the ◆ coconut ◆ flavored cocaine appeared to be a fine white powdery substance with a coconut-like odor, ◆ according to the DEA.

While it would be easy to ignore this issue as one of those strange California crazes, there ◆s justifiable concern that flavored drugs are a growing trend now spreading across the U.S. Recently, strawberry flavored methamphetamine was seized in the Galax, Va., area ◆ a place less than 100 miles and just over an hour ◆s drive from the southern West Virginia and Southwest Virginia region.

The drugs found in Galax were not seized from kids, and police do not believe dealers are targeting any children or schools with the flavored narcotic, Sgt. Michael Conroy, of the Virginia State Police Fourth District Area Headquarters in Wytheville, told the Daily Telegraph. But, he said police wanted to warn parents of the possible danger. Conroy said no candy cocaine has been seized in the Southwest Virginia area. We wish this will remain the case, but our hopes are dim.

◆ A couple of years ago, this (flavored cocaine) was kind of an urban legend, ◆ Conroy said. ◆ We were not really for sure. Now we ◆ve seen it, and seen it cross into another drug. That is why it is a concern. ◆

We share the concern of law enforcement officials about the potential dangers of this new form of cocaine and methamphetamine. If it wasn ◆t glaringly obvious before, no one should now doubt that dealers are attempting to entice customers with a more diverse product line.

Strawberry meth. Coconut cocaine. We would ask, ◆ What ◆s next? ◆, but we ◆re afraid of the answer.

News of this new drug underscores the fact that there is still a long way to go before the drug war in the two Virginias will be won, yet we must continue to fight. Drug dealers are not giving up. And, despite the constant challenges, neither can we.