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FDLE and Florida Medical Examiner Release Drug Report

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The Florida Department of Law Enforcement, FDLE, released the Florida Medical Examiners Commission Report on Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons. [A](#) | [A](#) | [A](#)

The report contains information compiled from autopsies performed by medical examiners across the state in 2008. During that period, there were approximately 171,800 deaths in Florida. Of those, 8,556 individuals were found to have died with one or more of the drugs specified in this report in their bodies.

The report indicates the most frequently occurring drugs found in decedents were Ethyl Alcohol (4,070), all Benzodiazepines (3,229), Cocaine (1,791) and Oxycodone (1,574). The drugs that caused the most deaths were Oxycodone, all Benzodiazepines (with Alprazolam, also known as Xanax, accounting for the majority of the deaths), Methadone, Cocaine, Ethyl Alcohol, Morphine and Hydrocodone.

The three drugs that were the most lethal, meaning more than 50 percent of the deaths were caused by the drug when the drug was found, were Heroin (90.2 percent), Methadone (74 percent), and Oxycodone (59.8 percent). Occurrences of Heroin increased by 20 percent and deaths caused by Heroin increased by 28 percent when compared to 2007.

Deaths caused by Cocaine declined by 23.1 percent and deaths caused by Methadone declined by 11.7 percent when compared with 2007. In addition, deaths caused by Methylated Amphetamines, Carisoprodol, Fentanyl, and Propoxyphene declined in this report.

Oxycodone and Alprazolam became more prevalent in 2008, with occurrences increasing by 25.6 percent and 29.4 percent respectively. Deaths caused by Oxycodone also increased by 33.5 percent and deaths caused by Alprazolam increased by 23.3 percent compared to 2007.

The report also indicates that prescription drugs continued to be found more often than illicit drugs both as a causal factor and merely present in the decedent. Prescription drugs account for 75 percent of all drug occurrences in this report when Ethyl Alcohol is excluded.

“The 2008 report reflects the threat and danger of prescription drug abuse,” said FDLE Commissioner Gerald Bailey. “Florida law enforcement is working aggressively to intercept those who traffic in prescription narcotics.”

“The magnitude and severity of prescription drug abuse calls for strong, coordinated action,” said Director of the Office of Drug Control Bill Janes. “Governor Charlie Crist has signed legislation that will improve standards of care, implement a prescription drug monitoring program, regulate pain clinics, and help prevent doctor shopping. As part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce drug-related deaths, this legislation represents a critical step toward reducing prescription drug abuse and diversion.”

Medical Examiners specifically collected information on the following drugs: Ethyl Alcohol, Amphetamines, Methamphetamines, MDMA (Ecstasy), MDA, MDEA, Alprazolam, Diazepam, Flunitrazepam (Rohypnol), other Benzodiazepines, Cannabinoids (Marijuana), Carisoprodol/Meprobamate, Cocaine, GHB, Inhalants, Ketamine, Fentanyl, Heroin, Hydrocodone, Hydromorphone, Meperidine, Methadone, Morphine, Oxycodone, Propoxyphene, Tramadol, and Phencyclidine (PCP).

The Florida Medical Examiners Commission 2008 Report of Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons is available on the FDLE Web site below.

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