

6 Dead in Central Russia After Suspected Synthetic Marijuana Poisoning

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A criminal case has been opened in the Khanty-Mansiisk autonomous region after six residents died from ingesting an unknown substance, believed to be a new kind of synthetic marijuana, RIA Novosti reported Friday.

The news follows reports of a mass poisoning from the popular drug that goes by the street name "spice" in the Kirov region. Four people died after consuming the drug in Kirov last weekend and dozens were hospitalized.

Investigators in the Khanty-Mansiisk region released a statement Friday confirming six deaths of people between the ages of 18 and 35, but they have not yet tied the deaths to synthetic marijuana poisoning.

A spokeswoman for the regional prosecutor told RIA Novosti that about 90 people had been poisoned and 36 hospitalized after ingesting an unknown psychoactive substance.

The symptoms listed were the same as those experienced by victims of poisoning in the Kirov

region: seizures, loss of consciousness, respiratory failure, inappropriate and strange behavior, the unidentified spokeswoman was cited as saying by RIA Novosti.

Smoking mixtures, commonly sold as synthetic marijuana or "spice," have been banned in Russia and included on a list of prohibited substances. Prior to their inclusion on the list, the substances were sold under the guise of common household substances, like fish food or bath salts.

Still, there are endless possibilities for synthesizing new compounds, allowing drug dealers to find loopholes in the law by simply creating new substances that have not yet been included on the list of banned substances.

The Federal Drug Control Service in the Kirov region said last week that the poisoning was likely a result of drug dealers creating new kinds of synthetic marijuana in a bid to skate around the law on banned substances.

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