

'Bath Salts' and Elkridge Drug Bust

Public health officials are trying to pull the plug on "bath salts" in Maryland; one synthetic drug seizure in Elkridge leads to barrels of others.

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The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (MDHMH) announced in a press release Thursday that it planned to ban the sale of "bath salts" in the state after finding there had been 22 poisoned, including one death, in Maryland involving the drugs.

As a result of snorting, swallowing or injecting the powder (which is not actual bath salt), users may develop cardiac and circulatory disturbances, agitation, delirium, paranoia, psychosis, or the desire to harm themselves and others, said the MDHMH.

Currently, the sale of bath salts is legal in Maryland. The granular, powdery substance is often called a "designer" drug because it's made up of chemicals "designed to mimic something—like cocaine," said Dudley Greer, director of Substance Abuse Services for the Howard County Health Department. "Since it's not the illegal substance itself and it's marketed as 'not for human consumption'...designer drugs can sometimes skirt the law."

But the state is working to change that. The proposed ban on the sale of "bath salts" would go into effect September 1.

Still, skeptics say—and several did in this [Baltimore Sun article](#)—that as the government bans one compound, chemists will design another, and the lines between them are blurred.

The [Sun](#) pointed to a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) raid of a storage facility in New Market, MD, on May 10, in which officials seized barrels filled with "bath salts" and leaves, which are legal. The person who led them there, [according to the Sun](#), was a woman working for the operation, after she was arrested in Elkridge on charges related to another designer drug, but one that is illegal.

On May 3, the UPS on Marshalee Drive received a tip from its security department about "suspected, unknown, controlled, dangerous substances in their stores," according to court records. The manager of the Elkridge UPS store called Howard County police when two women came to retrieve a package it deemed suspicious, stated the records.

Officers inspected the packages and found five bags of an "off-white powder," with elements of JWH-018, a chemical used to produce synthetic marijuana, which the DEA [banned in 2010](#). The

county's narcotics division investigated, identified the compound and found several similar packages in the ladies' vehicle, according to charging documents.

Two women—Blair Amanda Beebe, 21, and Sara Megan Pelter, 21, both of Virginia—now face felony charges of possession with intent to distribute and possession of a substance other than marijuana. The maximum sentence is four years for the former and five years for the latter, report the charging documents.

Beebe's lawyer filed an omnibus motion at the end of June requesting that all charges be dismissed, on grounds including lack of probable cause for the search in Elkridge and that evidence "was seized as a result of illegal interception of wire or oral communications," and "in violation of the constitutional and other legal rights of this defendant."

Beebe has a criminal trial in Howard County's Circuit Court scheduled for September 29; Pelter's trial is slated for November 2.