

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
The Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs



PRESS RELEASE

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DCRA Revokes Business License for Sale of Synthetic Drugs

Agency Begins Targeting Businesses Selling Lethal Products

Washington, D.C. – On February 12, 2015, the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) will revoke the business licenses associated with a convenience store located at 814 Bladensburg Road NE because they sold illegal synthetic drugs.

The District of Columbia Office of Administrative Hearings upheld DCRA’s decision to the revoke the licenses in an order issued last week; the order was the first of its kind covering DCRA’s synthetic drug regulations.

“Synthetic drugs have been linked to severe adverse health effects and, with names like Scooby Snax, appear to be marketed to children,” said DCRA Interim Director Melinda Bolling. **“This action sends a powerful message: if you sell synthetic drugs in the District of Columbia, you will lose your business license.”**

Synthetic drugs are manufactured substances intended to mimic the effects of illegal drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, methamphetamine, and ecstasy. Often, they are manufactured from substances that were not included on controlled substances lists. The substances usually hit the marketplace without being tested and health experts report that use of synthetic drugs can be life threatening.

To stay ahead of law enforcement, manufacturers frequently change the composition of synthetic drugs so that the products continue to be free of controlled substances at the time of manufacture.

However, [DCRA has adopted regulations](#) targeting the packaging and price of synthetic drugs rather than simply focusing on the contents. Under the regulations, government officials can treat products that are exorbitantly expensive and contain unusual warnings as synthetic drugs. For example, regulators could deduce that one gram of glass cleaner selling for \$20 and containing a warning “not for sale to minors” is a synthetic drug. If a business has any questions about a product that they are selling, they can seek clarification from DCRA about whether the product qualifies as a synthetic drug.

This is the District’s first licensure action against a business for selling synthetic drugs, and the agency continues to build cases against other businesses that may be selling synthetic drugs.

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