

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

oag.dc.gov



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday, February 10, 2015

Contact: Rob Marus, Communications Director: 202.724.5646; robert.marus@dc.gov
Ted Gest, Public Information Officer: 202.727.6283; ted.gest@dc.gov

Attorney General Racine Urges Nine Oil Companies to Eliminate Synthetic Drugs from their Retail Locations

District's First Elected AG Boosting Office's Engagement with Community Groups

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Attorney General Karl A. Racine today asked nine oil companies to collaborate with their franchisees to help eliminate synthetic drugs from retail locations operating under their brand names, including gas stations and convenience stores.

“Today, I’m joining my colleagues from around the country to ask these corporations to do everything they can to stop the sale of these drugs in stores that bear their names,” Attorney General Racine said. **“These dangerous drugs are a scourge across the nation and right here in the District, and they pose an enormous risk to all of our residents – especially to our young people.”**

The use of synthetic drugs has increased dramatically over the past four years. In 2010, more than 11,000 people, many of whom were younger than 17, went to the emergency room after using synthetic marijuana. Since then, thousands more have been harmed by synthetic drugs. In 2014, one health department reported a 220 percent increase in emergency-room visits due to the ingestion of synthetic marijuana. Over this same period, enforcement agencies confirmed more than 130 instances of branded gas stations having sold synthetic drugs.

In a letter co-sponsored by the Illinois and Florida attorneys general and joined attorneys general from 41 other states and territories, Attorney General Racine expressed concern over the problem of gas stations and convenience stores operating under brand names of reputable oil companies and selling illegal and extremely dangerous synthetic drugs. Many of these well-known retail locations give the appearance of safety and legitimacy to dangerous synthetic products. Enforcing stronger policies against the sale of synthetic drugs in retail locations can protect the brand reputations of these oil companies while also protecting our youth.

The attorneys general request the following actions be considered by these oil companies to address this growing problem:

- Prohibit franchisees from selling any synthetic drugs;
- Ensure this prohibition is understood by store franchisees and their employees by communicating directly with each of them;
- Establish a point of contact in corporate offices for franchisees, should they have any questions about synthetic drugs;
- Revoke franchisee/franchisor relationship with any gas station or convenience store that sells any kind of synthetic drugs; and
- Report to local law enforcement authorities if any franchisee is selling synthetic drugs.

Particularly popular with the District's young people, to whom they are marketed under such brand names as "Scooby Snacks," synthetic drugs first started turning up in D.C. in 2010. According to the Metropolitan Police Department, synthetic drugs are regularly sold at gas stations within the city. The D.C. Department of Health, as part of its K2 Zombie D.C. campaign to combat the use of synthetic marijuana among District youth, found in a 2013 poll that 17 percent of young respondents had seen it at a gas station. Another survey, taken in 2012, found that 20 percent of high school and 10 percent of middle school students had used synthetic drugs. The same poll found that 38 percent of high and 30 percent of middle school students think that people using synthetic marijuana risk doing harm to themselves.

The oil companies addressed in this letter are British Petroleum, Chevron Corporation, Citgo Petroleum Corporation, Exxon Mobil Corporation, Marathon Petroleum Corporation, Phillips 66, Shell Oil Company, Sunoco, and Valero Energy Corporation.

###