



Opioid Overdose Epidemic

A letter to the Community from Chief of Police
Paul LeBaron

2022

Hermosa Not Immune to Opioid Overdose Epidemic

As we begin a new year, I want to affirm to you that our men and women of the Hermosa Beach Police Department continue to provide excellent service while making Hermosa Beach the safest little beach City. In the spirit of community safety, I want to share some concerning information that is relevant to all members of our community. I speak specifically about the dangers of drugs, and in particular opioids.

The media headlines are currently filled with stories about communities devastated by loss from tragic drug overdose deaths. Unfortunately, our wonderful community is not immune to the current epidemic of opioid overdoses, and we must all work together to raise awareness of this issue.

Fentanyl is the Leading Cause of Record-Setting Overdose Deaths

A record number of more than [100,000 people](#) in the U.S. died from drug overdoses in the 12 months before April 2021. The leading cause of these deaths was fentanyl, a deadly synthetic opioid that is [50-100 times](#) more powerful than morphine and relatively inexpensive to produce so it is often substituted for other drugs, including cocaine, heroin and counterfeit prescription pills. It's even been found in marijuana. Fentanyl is tied to [64%](#) of drug fatalities, including the tragic overdose death of a Hermosa Beach teen in August of 2020.

Dealers Use Social Media Apps to Sell Drugs in Hermosa Beach

During our investigation of his death, our Detectives learned that many narcotics dealers were using popular social media platforms to advertise their products and to facilitate the buying and selling of illegal narcotics – in particular to our young people in Hermosa Beach. The social media platforms include Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp, Cash App and Telegram.

The use of these platforms gives dealers a much larger marketplace than in the past, when most of their business was done by word of mouth.



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While narcotics dealers and their customers operate under the belief that these platforms shield them from law enforcement, Hermosa Beach Police Detectives were not deterred. In response to credible information, Detectives began looking for subjects who were advertising narcotics for sale in our city. Below are examples of the types of messages they found offering illegal narcotics for sale.

As a result of a months-long undercover investigation, Detectives have arrested 4 adults and 1 juvenile in connection with the sale of narcotics. In each of these cases, the dealers agreed to bring the drugs to people in Hermosa Beach.



Deadly Fentanyl Prevalent in Drugs Sold to HBPD

The investigation led to our Officers buying 2,400 pills, of which 1,400 have tested positive for fentanyl. Lab results are pending on the remaining pills, and we expect they will also contain fentanyl. We share this information to make our community aware of how easily anybody, especially young people, can buy deadly illegal narcotics.

We believe that the HBPD's arrests and seizures of illegal narcotics represent a small portion of what is being brought into our community. One lost life is too many. We must acknowledge the real risks created by the buying and selling of illicit drugs, or more lives will be lost.

To our young people, I urge you to recognize how serious this is. Stay away from all drugs and do not let your friends use drugs. If you or someone you know is using drugs, there are resources available such as the L.A. County Public Health Hotline, 844-804-7500. Beach Cities Health Department provides a [list](#) of local treatment programs, and L.A. County has a [list of treatment programs](#) located throughout the County.

Parents Can Make a Difference

To parents, you must become more knowledgeable about what is happening in the lives of your family members. It is critical that you closely monitor your children's social media usage and conversations. Parental control settings and apps are readily available and can help protect your children. But nothing is more effective than talking with your kids and acting on the things you learn. Do not hesitate to talk with your teens and pre-teens about the dangers of drug use and discuss how many of the drugs purchased via social media may contain fentanyl.

Young people should be aware that fentanyl has become so prevalent in California that an [analysis](#) of state data found a young person under 24 is dying, on average, every 12 hours from a fentanyl overdose. That's a 1,000% increase over 2018, according to California's [drug overdose dashboard](#).

Please know that the men and women of the Hermosa Beach Police Department will continue to investigate drug-dealing in our City and will arrest and seek the prosecution of dealers selling or operating in Hermosa Beach. More importantly, we will continue to partner with you to keep Hermosa Beach safe. Let's make 2022 a year of health, happiness and safety for everyone.

Kindest regards,

Police Chief Paul LeBaron