

CITY COUNCIL REPORT

Public

DATE: September 8, 2015

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Lt. Scott Mansfield, Flagstaff Police Department

CC: Josh Copley, Jerene Watson, Barbara Goodrich, Leadership Team

SUBJECT: Heroin in Flagstaff

This report is in response to a request for further information regarding a possible increase of heroin use in the City of Flagstaff.

Executive Summary

The Flagstaff Police Department and the Northern Arizona Street Crimes Task Force (METRO) investigates several hundred drug cases each year. These cases include drugs such as marijuana, cocaine, ecstasy, hashish, heroin, LSD, methamphetamines, and hallucinogenic mushrooms.

As the Commander of the Metro Division, I have been asked to provide statistics that specifically relate to heroin within the City of Flagstaff and explore if there is a “rampant” problem. From the research and statistics I have pulled from the METRO narcotics unit, Flagstaff Police Department records division, and the Coconino County Medical Examiner’s Office I have determined there is not a rampant problem with heroin in Flagstaff currently. Please understand I am not saying we do not have heroin users and dealers in Flagstaff, but rather that we have been dealing with other drugs such as prescription pills, Marijuana, and Methamphetamine with much more frequency than heroin recently.

Background

I have also spoken with the METRO narcotics agents as well as the Metro Sergeant regarding heroin in Flagstaff. The METRO unit knows best which drugs are the biggest problem in Flagstaff as far as quantity. The reason they have the most knowledge of which drugs are the biggest problem is because they work drug cases involving users and dealers as their primary mission. Metro agents have relayed that heroin is not currently a major issue in Flagstaff in comparison to other types of drugs. METRO agents also often work with confidential informants who provide intelligence regarding the drug trade in

Flagstaff. Again, the informants mainly provide intelligence on various drug trends in Flagstaff, most notably Methamphetamine which tends to impact our community the most in terms of the amount of users and crimes associated with it. METRO has also seen an increase of use and sales in “club drugs” recently which involves LSD, Ecstasy, and cocaine. These are being primarily used by people between the ages of 18-30.

The METRO unit also receives a large quantity of intelligence on the drug trade from the patrol officers working their beats. These patrol officers typically know the drug users and dealers and the types of drugs that are being used. Again, the majority of drug intelligence provided by our patrol officers to the METRO unit indicates a prevalence of the use and sale of Methamphetamine in Flagstaff.

Drug arrests from 2011-YTD 2015

In conducting research into this topic, I worked with a Flagstaff Police Department records department to obtain statistics for the total number of drug arrests the Flagstaff Police Department has made and how many of those arrests were for possession/use of Heroin. Comparing the total number of drug arrests to the total number of heroin arrests provides good perspective of the use of drugs including heroin in Flagstaff.

- 2011- total number of drug arrests was 828. Of those 828 arrests, 4 were arrested for possession/use of heroin
- 2012- total number of drug arrests was 839. Of those 839 arrests, 9 were for possession/use of heroin.
- 2013- total number of drug arrests was 863. Of those 863 arrests, 6 were for possession/use of heroin.
- 2014- total number of drug arrests was 962. Of those 962 arrests, 11 were for possession/use of heroin.
- Year to date 2015- total number YTD drug arrests is 709. Of those 709 arrests, 5 were for possession/use of heroin.

As you can see from these numbers, the percentage of heroin arrests when compared to all other drug arrests is actually relatively low.

Drug overdose deaths

Unfortunately the Flagstaff Police Department does respond to drug overdose deaths every year and it is important to look at those in comparison to heroin overdose deaths. By looking at these numbers, it will again provide a good perspective at a possible heroin problem compared to other drug problems.

In order to obtain the drug overdose death statistics that occurred within the Flagstaff Police Department jurisdiction, I spoke with the Administrative Manager for the Coconino County Medical Examiner’s Office. I explained what statistics I was looking for and she provided me the following information:

- 2010- total number of drug overdose deaths was 10. Of those 10 overdose deaths, 1 was due to heroin
- 2011- total number of drug overdose deaths was 6. Of those 6 overdose deaths, none were due to heroin.
- 2012- total number of drug overdose deaths was 8. Of those 8 overdose deaths, none were due to heroin
- 2013- total number of drug overdose deaths was 15. Of those 15 overdose deaths, none were due to heroin.
- 2014- total number of drug overdose deaths was 11. Of those 11 overdose deaths, 1 was due to heroin.
- YTD 2015- total number YTD drug overdose deaths is 4. Of those 4 overdose deaths, none are due to heroin.

Once again the statistics show out of 54 drug overdose deaths in Flagstaff from 2010 to current, only 2 were reported to have been from heroin.

Metro Unit Statistics

The Northern Arizona Street Crimes Task Force (METRO) continues to proactively investigate drug related crimes in Coconino County. As previously mentioned, METRO investigates a wide variety of drug cases which also includes heroin. METRO agents are constantly seeking ways to infiltrate heroin rings and target the dealers who are supplying the drug. I was provided the following statistical information regarding the quantity of heroin METRO has seized/purchased:

- 2010- 248.81 grams of heroin was seized/purchased by METRO.
- 2011- 100.91 grams of heroin was seized/purchased by METRO.
- 2012- 59.25 grams of heroin was seized/purchased by METRO.
- 2013- 8.3 grams of heroin was seized/purchased by METRO.
- 2014- 73.82 grams of heroin was seized/purchased by METRO.
- YTD 2015- 40.40 grams of heroin was seized/purchased by METRO.

If we compare these numbers with other illegal drugs in Flagstaff such as methamphetamine, we can see a clear distinction in quantity.

- 2010- 650.6 grams of methamphetamine was seized/purchased by METRO
- 2011-238.73 grams of methamphetamine was seized/purchased by METRO
- 2012- 907.8 grams of methamphetamine was seized/purchased by METRO
- 2013- 699.77 grams of methamphetamine was seized/purchased by METRO
- 2014- 347.61 grams of methamphetamine was seized/purchased by METRO

- YTD 2015- 246.18 grams of methamphetamine was seized/purchased by METRO

Heroin in the state of Arizona

While conducting further research into heroin in Flagstaff, I also looked into heroin trends in Arizona. To obtain some of the heroin statistics I turned to an organization named Arizona High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, also known as HIDTA. HIDTA is reporting a rise in heroin use in Arizona but it shows the increase to be predominantly in the Phoenix metropolitan area and southern Arizona.

I looked at the data HIDTA provided for heroin overdoses in Arizona between the years of 2009-2013. The data presented was drawn from a Cronkite News analysis of public records from the 2009-2013 Arizona Hospital Discharge Data Set, gathered by the Bureau of Public Health Statistics, Arizona Department of Health Services. In this data, it gives overdoses broken down by race and a total number for every year. Obviously since this is coming from the Arizona Hospital Discharge Data Set, these are most likely people who were admitted into the hospital for heroin overdoses. Typically the heroin overdose deaths we investigate are normally not people who were admitted into the hospital. On this site you can look at a map of Arizona regarding these statistics for those years and there were no reported heroin overdoses in Flagstaff from our hospital. The nearest cities to Flagstaff that reported heroin overdoses through the hospital was Prescott at 24 and Prescott Valley at 15. It is important to know, HIDTA has also published an article regarding Prescott documenting that their city officials estimate nearly 1,500 addicts arrive in town every three months for treatment. This area has 153 registered treatment programs and group homes for addicts in a town with a population of just 40,000 people.

To get some feel for the prevalence of heroin in Coconino county, we can also compare the quantity of heroin that has been seized/purchased by county and city task forces. I obtained the following statistics from the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission edge report from 2014:

- Apache County Sheriffs Task Force- 0 grams of heroin seized/purchased
- Cochise County Sheriff's Task Force- 6,920.2 grams of heroin seized/purchased
- Coconino County (METRO)- 73.82 grams of heroin seized/purchased (49.4 grams on report but had late entries into report)
- Gila County Sheriff's Office- 265.2 grams of heroin seized/purchased
- Graham County Sheriff's Office- 28.5 grams of heroin seized/purchased
- Greenlee County Sheriff's Office- 1 gram of heroin seized/purchased
- Kingman Police Department- 1,132 grams of heroin seized/purchased
- Navajo County Sheriff's Office- 5,694.8 grams of heroin seized/purchased
- Tucson Police Department- 68,061.4 grams of heroin seized/purchased

- Pinal County Sheriff's Office- 18.2 grams of heroin seized/purchased
- Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Office- 20,004 grams of heroin seized/purchased
- Yavapai County (PANT)- 1,481.2 grams of heroin seized/purchased
- Yuma County Sheriff's Office- 35,631.1 grams of heroin seized/purchased

Heroin nationwide

I have also reviewed the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) intelligence report regarding the national heroin threat assessment. This report discusses the national problem with heroin and compares it to other drugs as well. As expected on a national level, heroin has a smaller user population than other major illicit drugs, but that population is growing.

In the publication it refers to a National Drug Threat Survey that is conducted across the nation in which the United States is separated into different regions. The survey reports the different regions that feel heroin poses the greatest drug threat over any other drug in 2015. Arizona is placed into the southwest region and it has the lowest percentage in the nation at 4.3%. The New England region is 63.4%, Pacific region is 33.4%, West Central is at 15.5%, New York/New Jersey is at 48.4%, and Southeast is at 10.9%.

The publication also indicates that heroin overdoses have increased in many cities around the nation but particularly in the Northeast region and the Midwest region. The report also states the availability levels of heroin are highest in the Northeast and in the Midwest where white powder heroin is most prevalent.

Conclusion

I have spoken with the METRO narcotics Sergeant and he has expressed to me what METRO is experiencing is in line with the state and national statistics. We do have heroin users and dealers in Flagstaff but it is not nearly as common as other drugs. The Flagstaff Police Department and the METRO unit remain committed toward aggressively investigating any and all drug cases.

This report has been completed for informational purposes only.