

CASCADE COUNTY



P.O. Box 2982

Great Falls, MT 59403

Business

Address

May 8, 2020

Dear Name,

We would like to bring to your notice an ongoing drug problem our community has been facing, which has been exacerbated by some of the products your business may be selling. Numerous community partners have expressed grave concern regarding these products. And, we want to reach out to you as a fellow community partner and ask you what do you really know about the products you are selling and do you truly understand what they are doing to the members of your own community, particularly our youth?

We are talking about products such as Kratom, which is sold as a “natural” alternative for treatment for pain. Serious problems with Kratom include:

- It has a very high potential for addiction.
- It has complex properties, because it is both a stimulant and a sedative.
- Because Kratom is a plant, the perception is that it’s healthy. Poison Ivy and Anthrax are both plants, but you wouldn’t want to roll around in or ingest either of them.
- Withdrawal is very difficult and often requires medical treatment.
- There is NO scientific proof that it works.

“As a law enforcement professional with over 29 years of experience in this community, I can tell you that selling products like Kratom is only contributing to the ongoing substance abuse problems we face and is setting up the next generation for ongoing addictive behavior.”

---Dave Bowen, Chief of Police Great Falls Police Department

“Almost all criminal activity in Great Falls is connected to substance use. We are working tirelessly to provide treatment to those suffering from substance use disorders. The addictive nature of synthetic drugs like Kratom, coupled with the erratic effects of its use, undermines our efforts to keep the community safe.”

---Gregory G. Pinski, District Judge

Dr. Deborah Rose from Benefis Health System reached out about her concern with the number of emergency room visits related to Kratom. Here is an excerpt from the letter she wrote to SAPA:

“There are several serious problems with Kratom:

It is distributed and sold without any respected laboratory verification of contents and strength. In 2018 the CDC reported a 41-state outbreak of salmonella, a total of 199 cases resulting in 50 hospitalizations. At that time there were no deaths, and several companies recalled their products. However, Kratom-associated

deaths have been reported from many locations around the world. However, often other drugs were used along with Kratom. Kratom itself often has other contaminants.

Effects of the drug vary with the dosage. In other words, at low doses Kratom acts more like a stimulant; at moderate doses it produces an opioid-like effect; and high doses can result in coma and death.

Of great concern is the very high potential for addiction. Kratom has complex properties because it is both a stimulant and a pain killer/sedative. Because it is a plant, either the dried plant material or an extract, the perception is that it is healthy. Kratom can interact with other herbs and psychoactive medications in unpredictable ways.

Until this drug has been studied more thoroughly the use of unregulated products—sadly sold openly here in Great Falls despite the known harmful effects—should be avoided. Kratom is dangerous. Kratom withdrawal is very difficult and may require medical treatment.”

In addition to Kratom, other products you may have on your shelves include: Spice/K2 and Bath Salts, which are:

- unregulated
- have no safety standards
- have a very high potential for addiction

This makes our community, particularly youth, at high risk for:

- seizures
- hallucinations
- suicidal tendencies
- homicidal tendencies
- delusions
- aggression
- paranoia

Spice/K2 is sold under alternative names such as “Snax.” When you have to call something other than what it actually is to avoid FDA regulations, it should be a good indicator that you’re doing something wrong. The same goes for Bath Salts. If you label them as plant food, jewelry cleaner or cell phone cleaner, but you know people are going to ingest them...RED ALERT.

This all being said, we are asking you to join your community to help with solving the problem. We would like to know if you are open to the idea of making changes to the products you sell.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you for taking the time to read this letter with thoughtful consideration. We are available to answer any questions you may have.

We look forward to collaborating with you to protect the youth of Great Falls and Cascade County and to improve the quality of life of our community.

Sincerely,

Cascade County
Substance Abuse Prevention
(SAPA)
(406) 952-0468