

New law promises higher penalties for those caught selling bath salts

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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SPRINGFIELD - A new Illinois law promises to enforce higher penalties for any retail mercantile establishment selling what are commonly referred to as "bath salts."

Senate Bill 210, called the **Bath Salts Prohibition Act**, states any retail establishment in violation of the law faces a Class 3 felony, which includes a fine not exceeding \$150,000. The license of that establish may also be revoked following the charges. The act defines bath salts as "any synthetic or natural material containing any quantity of a cathinone chemical structure, including any analogs, salts, isomers or isomers of any synthetic or natural material containing a cathinone chemical structure."

Melanie Nagel, of the **Drug Free Alton Project**, described bath salts as "a nasty drug," adding several retailers continue to sell similar drugs after they are made illegal through various legal loopholes. The drug, which has been reported to cause death, serious illness and even an instance or two of attempted face eating has been prohibited since 2011. This act increases the penalty.

Alton Police Detective Sgt. Pete Vambaketes said that ban was put in place by the **Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA)** in 2011 when methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) was moved to a schedule 1 substance. Vambaketes said MDMA was the "original designer drug ingredient in bath salts."

"Since then, many new bath salts have arrived on the market that have analogous replica drugs as main ingredients," he said via text. "That is, these chemists have created multiple drugs that are chemically similar to MDMA, but not quite the same thing, all in an effort to circumvent possessing and creating the now-illegal MDMA."

The issue with bath salts is one known to the **Alton Police Department**. Vambaketes said individuals selling or possessing such substances are already charged under the controlled substances act.

According to a June 1, 2012, report from ABC News, a homeless **Miami** man was shot and killed by police after he was found allegedly chowing down on another homeless man's face. **Randy Eugene** was stopped by four police bullets after police and witnesses claimed he had eaten the face of **Ronald Poppo** "down to his goatee." One witness said the forehead was "just bone," adding there was "no nose," and "no mouth." Eugene was reportedly under the influence of bath salts during that incident.