



Houston, we have a problem: drivers are high on angel dust (PCP)

February 12, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PCP or angel dust is one of the two most prevalent drugs in impaired drivers in Houston, making it the largest metro area in the nation to have a significant problem with the dangerous hallucinogen.

The finding is revealed in a [research article published Wednesday in the Journal of Analytical Toxicology](#). The article is co-authored by Dr. Dayong Lee, the Houston Forensic Science Center's toxicology manager, and Dr. Peter Stout, HFSC's CEO and president, who is also a toxicologist.

"This is scary," Dr. Stout said. "These people when put behind the wheel of a car endanger our community, our families and our children. We have an obligation to make people aware of this danger."

PCP or phencyclidine often comes as a solution for users to dip cigarettes or joints. It gives them an almost out-of-body experience where they become detached from their environment.

The research looks at impaired driving data from the past six years in Houston. The blood samples analyzed from arrests, 85 percent of those that tested positive for PCP were black, and 77 percent were men. The average age was 37.

Analysts found PCP in 615 DWI samples between 2013 and 2018, 16 percent of the total for those years, ranking only behind marijuana.

"PCP is hallucinogenic and profoundly distorts a person's perception of reality. That is extremely hazardous for someone driving a vehicle," Dr. Stout said. "Put them behind a

wheel and they become dangerous to others on the road. This is happening in Houston all too often.”

PCP, first introduced as an anesthetic, was taken off the market in the 1960s.

Clandestine use has ebbed and flowed and had been popular in the 1970s and 1980s in some urban areas, including Baltimore, Los Angeles, Chicago and New Orleans.

Today, significant PCP use is largely concentrated to a handful of urban areas, including Houston, New York and Washington, D.C.

HFSC is a local government corporation that provides forensic services to the City of Houston and other local agencies. HFSC is overseen by a Board of Directors appointed by the Mayor of Houston and confirmed by the Houston City Council. Its management structure is designed to be responsive to a 2009 recommendation by the National Academy of Sciences that called for crime laboratories to be independent of law enforcement and prosecutorial branches of government.

HFSC operates in seven forensic disciplines.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Ramit Plushnick-Masti

Director of Communications/PIO

media@houstonforensicscience.org

www.houstonforensicscience.org

713-703-4898 (cell)

Follow us on Facebook <http://on.fb.me/1x1zap2>

Follow us on Twitter <https://twitter.com/HoustonForensic>