

The Crime Report | (<https://thecrimereport.org/2017/08/16/fentanyl-called-weapon-of-mass-destruction/>)

Fentanyl Called ‘Weapon of Mass Destruction’

By **Crime and Justice News** | August 16, 2017

Fentanyl, a synthetic painkiller, is exacerbating heroin’s deadly trap. In cities across the U.S., it is fueling deeper addiction and has become one of the most prominent killers linked to the nation’s drug crisis, reports the Washington Post (https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2017/national/fentanyl-overdoses/?utm_term=.07b3d554b8c3). Says one addict in Philadelphia, “If you catch a pure bag of fentanyl, that Narcan ain’t bringing you back.” Like many other cities long mired in a battle against opioid addiction, Philadelphia is seeing the precipitous rise of illicit fentanyl. Once a minor player in the drug crisis, the man-made narcotic — about 50 times stronger than heroin — is directly linked to thousands of overdoses and a shocking rise in fatalities nationwide.

In 24 of the nation’s largest cities and the counties that surround them, fentanyl-related overdose deaths increased nearly 600 percent from 2014 to 2016, according to county health departments nationwide. Overdose records in those cities reviewed by the Post, there were 582 fatal overdoses linked to fentanyl in 2014, a number that soared to 3,946 last year. Officials estimate there will be a much higher number of fatal fentanyl-related overdoses in 2017. Law enforcement and public health officials are alarmed by the rate at which fentanyl has infiltrated the illicit drug market and how it is transforming the face of the drug crisis, which resulted in 60,000 fatal overdoses in 2016, more than half of which were from opioids. “If anything can be likened to a weapon of mass destruction in what it can do to a community, it’s fentanyl,” said Michael Ferguson, the agent in charge of the Drug Enforcement Administration’s New England division. “It’s manufactured death.”
