



Maine Drug Monitoring Initiative

Maine Information and Analysis Center



207-624-7280

MIAC.msp@maine.gov

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(U) Purpose: *This Maine Drug Monitoring Initiative (DMI) report is a collection of information obtained from various sources and partners, including but not limited to public health, law enforcement, and EMS. The MIAC welcomes the sharing of information that your agency believes may be beneficial to this report and to other agencies.*

(U) PUBLIC HEALTH AWARENESS

(U) Medetomidine

(U) Despite a decline in U.S. drug overdose deaths since 2022, the illicit drug supply remains increasingly contaminated with potent synthetic substances. One growing concern is medetomidine, an alpha-2 adrenergic sedative, first identified in the illicit drug supply in 2021. Since mid-2023, authorities have increasingly detected medetomidine mixed with fentanyl in several areas, including Chicago, Philadelphia, and Pittsburgh, and by July 2024 it had been identified in at least 18 states and the District of Columbia.¹

(U) Medetomidine can cause severe drowsiness, a slowed heart rate, and low blood pressure. Repeated exposure followed by the abrupt discontinuing of the drug can also lead to severe withdrawal symptoms, including high blood pressure, anxiety, nausea, vomiting, and changes in alertness. Unlike xylazine, medetomidine does not appear to be associated with development of non-healing skin wounds.¹

(U) Opioid overdose reversal medications (OORMs), such as **naloxone**, can reverse opioid effects, but are not efficient at reversing the effects of medetomidine or other substances taken with it. Because **fentanyl** is involved in most overdoses involving medetomidine, OORMs should still be given in suspected overdoses to help restore breathing. Even when breathing improves, sedation may continue.¹

(U) Available data suggests the spread and detection of medetomidine appears to be expanding:¹

- (U) Reports submitted to the National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) from law enforcement drug seizures, increased from 247 in 2023 to 2,616 in 2024 and 8,233 in 2025.
- (U) In 2025, medetomidine accounted for less than 1% of all drug reports nationwide, with more than half of those reports coming from the Northeast (52%), followed by the Midwest (31%).
- (U) From October 2025 through January 2026, medetomidine was detected weekly in treated wastewater in at least one of the 14 states participating in a U.S. wastewater testing program.
- (U) From July through December 2025, half of participating U.S. sentinel sites detected medetomidine, and at those sites it appeared in nearly 35% of opioid-positive samples.
- (U) Among 995 medetomidine-positive drug samples, 98% had fentanyl co-detected, consistent with reports of medetomidine being mixed into products sold as fentanyl.

(U) These findings indicate that medetomidine is an emerging adulterant in the illicit drug supply. Its rapid spread and frequent presence with fentanyl raise concern for increased

overdose risk and more complex medical response.¹ Additional information regarding this topic can be found [here](#).

(U) Benzimidazol-2-ones: Orphines

(U) A February 2026 health alert from the Colombo Plan and the Center for Forensic Science Research and Education identified a new class of synthetic opioids called benzimidazol-2-ones, or “orphines,” detected in the U.S. and international drug markets. These substances may be as strong as, or stronger than, the fentanyl class of opioids. When combined with other opioids, orphines can increase the risk of slowed or stopped breathing and death.^{2,3}

(U) In the U.S., orphine-related cases have been identified in seized drug samples from 20 states, including three in ME, and in fatal overdose blood specimens from 9 states. Illinois (IL) reported the most seized samples at 94, followed by Tennessee (TN) with 33, while fatal overdose blood specimens were reported in New York, Pennsylvania, Texas, Louisiana, Washington, California, Nevada, IL, and TN.^{2,3} Additional information regarding this topic can be found [here](#).

(U) ME DRUG TRAFFICKING ENFORCEMENT ACTIVITY

(U) During February and March 2026, coordinated drug trafficking investigations by ME law enforcement led to major seizures in Somerset, Cumberland, Waldo, Penobscot, and Androscoggin Counties:

- **(U) Somerset County:** In Skowhegan, a February traffic stop resulted in the seizure of 25.49 grams of fentanyl, 28.67 grams of methamphetamine, 52.59 grams of cocaine, \$1,021 in cash, and a firearm.⁴
- **(U) Cumberland County:** A search warrant executed by the ME Drug Enforcement Agency (MDEA), the South Portland Police Department (PD), and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) led to the seizure of more than 500 grams of cocaine, 13 grams of crack cocaine, and more than \$38,000 in suspected drug proceeds from a residence in Portland. In a separate investigation in Scarborough, law enforcement seized 395 grams of cocaine, 2.6 pounds of marijuana, and oxycodone pills.^{5,6}
- **(U) Waldo County:** Two search warrants executed by MDEA, the Maine State Police, the Waldo County Sheriff’s Office, and Searsport PD led to the seizure of 99 grams of methamphetamine, 24 grams of cocaine, 30 firearms, and \$4,390 in suspected drug proceeds from a residence in Searsport. Multiple individuals were arrested on aggravated trafficking charges.⁷
- **(U) Penobscot County:** Penobscot County Sheriff’s Office deputies seized nearly 1 kilogram of illegal drugs, including methamphetamine, cocaine, crack cocaine, and fentanyl from a residence in Hermon.⁸
- **(U) Androscoggin County:** A months-long investigation in Turner led to the seizure of 25.2 grams of fentanyl, 15.2 grams of cocaine, 11.79 grams of crack cocaine, 18.5 grams of methamphetamine, three firearms, and \$3,953 in suspected drug proceeds.^{9,10}

(U) Across these reported incidents, cocaine was the stimulant seized most often. Methamphetamine was frequently found alongside cocaine and fentanyl, while fentanyl appeared in smaller but consistent amounts. Overall, these incidents reflect continued multi-agency efforts to disrupt drug trafficking across ME.

(U) ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

(U) Overdose Data and Trends

[\(U\) ME Overdose Data](#): The ME Drug Data Hub reported 61 confirmed and suspected fatal overdoses in January and February 2026, down 4.7% from 64 confirmed fatal overdoses during the same period in 2025.

[\(U\) National Overdose Snapshot](#): Nationally, reported overdose deaths declined 17.1% for the 12-month period ending in October 2025, compared with October 2024, although progress has slowed in some areas, especially parts of the western United States.

[\(U\) 2026 DEA Seizures](#): DEA nationwide seizures to date include 8.4 million fentanyl pills, 2,783 pounds of fentanyl powder, 778,300 methamphetamine pills, 36,115 pounds of methamphetamine powder, and 38,967 pounds of cocaine powder.

[\(U\) Medetomidine Overdoses](#): From January 1, 2023, through January 31, 2026, the National Drug Early Warning System reported 58 EMS encounters involving nonfatal drug overdoses linked to medetomidine.

[\(U\) Older Adult Overdose Surge](#): A recent study found that overdose deaths involving fentanyl mixed with stimulants increased 9,000% among older adults from 2015 to 2023.

(U) Emerging Substances

[\(U\) Cychlorphine](#): N-propionitrile chlorphine, also known as cychlorphine, has been identified in 25 fatal overdose blood specimens, most submitted in late 2025 and early 2026, and has also been tentatively identified in more than 100 toxicology cases. The substance belongs to a subclass of novel synthetic opioids often referred to as “orphine analogues” and bears structural similarity to other benzimidazolones.

[\(U\) Cychlorphine Naloxone Administration Alert](#): The Tennessee Department of Health reported more than 30 fatal overdoses statewide since October 2025 associated with cychlorphine, which is believed to be significantly more potent than fentanyl.

[\(U\) 7-OH](#): The FDA has issued a warning about 7-OH, a powerful psychoactive compound linked to the Kratom plant. According to the FDA, it is 13 times more potent than morphine and is being sold in retail stores and online.

(U) Resources and Training

[\(U\) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\) Toolkit](#): SAMHSA’s updated Overdose Prevention and Response Toolkit provides guidance on overdose prevention, naloxone, and overdose response.

[\(U\) Overdose Response Strategy \(ORS\) Webinar](#): The next Overdose Response Strategy Trends, Analysis, and Threats Webinar is scheduled for 6 May 2026, from 2:00 to 3:00 p.m. EST. To register, please click on the link provided.

[\(U\) ORS Program Overview](#): The Overdose Response Strategy is a public health and public safety partnership focused on reducing overdose deaths and supporting collaboration. For more information, please click on the provided link or contact the [Maine ORS team](#).

Sources:

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Health Alert Network (HAN), “Medetomidine in the U.S. Illegal Fentanyl Supply Increasing Risk for Overdose and Severe Withdrawal Syndrome,” HAN00527, 2026. <https://www.cdc.gov/han/php/notices/han00527.html>

² Colombo Plan Drug Advisory Programme & Center for Forensic Science Research and Education. *Emerging Global Synthetic Opioid Threats: Benzimidazol-2-ones (Orphines)*. February 2026. <https://www.cadca.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Orphines-Global-Alert-Feb-2026.pdf>

³ ORS Program. *TAT Webinar Materials*, March 2026. <https://orsprogram.org/tat-webinars/>

⁴ Q1065 News, “Maine drug seizures in Skowhegan traffic stop,” February 2026. <https://q1065.fm/maine-drugs-portland-skowhegan-february-2026/>

⁵ Maine Drug Enforcement Agency (MDEA), official release, March 27, 2026 (Portland, Maine cocaine trafficking seizure).

⁶ WGME News, “Cocaine, marijuana and oxycodone pills seized during Scarborough drug bust,” March 2026. <https://wgme.com/news/local/cocaine-marijuana-and-oxycodone-pills-seized-during-scarborough-drug-bust-maine-omar-shir-crime-mohamed-abdullahi-rafticking-of-scheduled-drugs>

⁷ Maine Drug Enforcement Agency (MDEA), official release, March 10, 2026 (Searsport, Maine dual-location trafficking investigation).

⁸ News Center Maine, “Deputies make several drug arrests after searching Hermon home,” March 2026 (video report). <https://www.newscentermaine.com/video/news/local/public-safety/deputies-make-several-drug-arrests-after-searching-hermon-home/97-da4ed530-4ce5-4958-930d-e2aebd1d5a04>

⁹ WMTW News, “Three from Maine arrested after Turner drug bust, officials say,” March 2026. <https://www.wmtw.com/article/turner-maine-drug-bust-bean-street-three-arrests/70726820>

¹⁰ Newport Dispatch, “Three arrested on drug trafficking charges in Turner,” March 2026. <https://www.newportdispatch.com/2026/03/11/three-arrested-on-drug-trafficking-charges-in-turner/>