



# Idaho State Police

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**To:** Idaho Law Enforcement  
**From:** Matthew Gamette, ISP Forensic Services Laboratory System Director  
**Subject:** Fentanyl in Idaho and Field Testing  
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## Update on Fentanyl in Idaho

Currently in Idaho we are most commonly seeing round blue pills with an imprint of “M” on one side and are scored with a “30” on the other side. The colors of these pills vary in intensity and are sometimes green or tan in color. Most commonly the pills contain acetaminophen and fentanyl or the fentanyl analog fluorofentanyl; precursors to these compounds such as ANPP are also seen.

When fentanyl started emerging in the illicit drug scene in the United States, safety bulletins and warnings were developed by various agencies. Fentanyl and analogs of fentanyl are extremely toxic substances, meaning a small amount can be fatal. In some cases, the initial warnings focused on the very dire consequences that could occur with exposure to these drugs. Additionally, there were media reports that dramatized the risks. These drugs do pose a significant risk, but there may be some misconceptions related to the hazards.

The information shared with and spread through law enforcement often overstated the realistic exposure risk in real life situations. Solid fentanyl samples are not readily absorbed through the skin and wearing gloves when handling provides adequate skin protection. The greatest risk of exposure is from inhalation of airborne particulates. The tableted form of fentanyl that we are currently seeing reduces the risk of powder being suspended in the air; however, an N95 respirator is recommended when handling large amounts of tablets or powder samples. The safest way to handle suspected fentanyl samples is to leave the substance sealed in the original packaging and submit it to the laboratory for analysis.

Additional information on potential routes of exposure and recommendations to prevent exposure can be accessed at: [https://www.acmt.net/Library/Positions/Fentanyl\\_PPE\\_Emergency\\_Responders\\_.pdf](https://www.acmt.net/Library/Positions/Fentanyl_PPE_Emergency_Responders_.pdf)

## Field Testing of Fentanyl

Field testing generally increases risk of exposure to the responder performing the test. There are both chemical and instrumental field tests available. Many of these tests are sensitive, but commonly samples have a small amount of fentanyl in relation to large amounts of other compounds, which may cause false negative results. Some colorimetric field tests produce similar results for amphetamines and fentanyl, and laboratory analysis is necessary to determine which of these two drug classes is present.

**Reminder:** There are hazards and limitations associated with presumptive color test kits. Misinterpretation (i.e. false positive and false negative results) and violent reactions that can cause injury are associated with misuse of these kits. Officers must read and follow the directions for use and interpretation. Color tests are presumptive and should only be used on the substrates intended and in the manner outlined.

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