



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF ATTORNEY GENERAL HENRY MCMASTER
STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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White House Drug Czar Joins Attorney General For SC Meth Watch Kick-off

Columbia, S.C. - Attorney General Henry McMaster and John P. Walters, director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), officially launched the South Carolina Meth Watch program today at the Irmo Family Pharmacy located in the Murraywood Centre in Irmo. They were joined by representatives from LRADAC, The Behavioral Health Center of the Midlands, as well as local elected officials and law enforcement.

Sponsored and operated by the Attorney General's office, S.C. Meth Watch is a voluntary education, training and public visibility program involving law enforcement and retailers designed to deter the theft or illegal purchase of common household products used in the illicit manufacturing of methamphetamine. A partner in the Meth Watch program, Adjutant General Stan Spears has assigned National Guard personnel to staff the effort.

The Greenville based Bi-Lo grocery store chain is the first retailer to join the SC Meth Watch program and has ordered training videos and materials for all its South Carolina stores.

"Meth is the kudzu of illegal drugs, it's spreading at a fast pace and it's everywhere." McMaster said. "The Meth Watch program has proven effective in a number of states, and I anticipate the same success here."

John Walters, Director of National Drug Policy said, "Meth production and use has destroyed too many families and communities across our nation. We can significantly reduce the threat from drugs in our nation by preventing use before it starts, treating those who have become addicted, and disrupting the production and supply of these dangerous, addictive substances. I commend Attorney General McMaster for his leadership on this issue and congratulate anti-drug community leaders in the State of South Carolina who are doing their part to protect our young people from harm."

"We are proud to join with the Attorney General and our partners with the Community Roundtable in this effort to reduce the risk this highly addictive and dangerous drug poses to our community," said LRADAC executive director Jack Claypoole. "Working together with local merchants, we are confident that this community will serve as our state's model in how to best to reduce the manufacture and use of methamphetamine."

Training videos and materials have been provided to participating retailers, and they have been trained in seminars conducted by the Attorney General's Office. Store items commonly used in the manufacture of meth are identified and marked with shelf tags, indicating that they are monitored merchandise. Employees are trained by management to recognize common characteristics of Meth abusers and the combinations of items they are likely to purchase or attempt to steal.

Also part of the Meth Watch program, law enforcement officials around the state have also been trained in the Meth Watch program's series of seminars to expect calls from retailers that may contain valuable information that could lead to arrests.

Methamphetamine, also known as "meth," "speed," "crank," or "ice," is a very powerful and highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. Meth is a synthetic drug produced or sold as pills, capsules, or powder that can be smoked, snorted, injected, or swallowed.

Methamphetamine is a neurotoxin, meaning it damages the nervous system. Meth use can cause dependence and addiction psychosis, stroke, dangerously high body temperature, and cardiac arrhythmia. Withdrawal often results in severe depression and paranoia.

Through Meth Watch, retailers and law enforcement will help increase awareness about the diversion of legal products to the illegal manufacture of methamphetamine and will assist local communities in addressing the meth problem.

McMaster continues to push for passage of H. 3591, sponsored by Columbia Representative Joan Brady. The legislation would have a dramatic impact on the way the state is able to fight the exploding problem of methamphetamine (Meth) use and production. The bill is currently being considered by a sub-committee of the state House of Representatives.

SC Meth Watch: www.scattorneygeneral.com/scmethwatch

ONDCP Director: www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/about/director_bio.html

LRADAC: <http://www.lradac.org/>

Irmo Family Pharmacy: <http://www.irmofamilypharmacy.com>

Editorial on SC Meth Watch: <http://www.charleston.net/stories/?newsID=21241§ion=editorials>

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