

Assembly outlaws chemical known as 'synthetic marijuana'

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A street chemical that authorities say can cause severe reactions will be illegal in Anchorage starting in early January.

The Anchorage Assembly on Tuesday voted unanimously to ban the sale, possession or use of products containing synthetic versions of cannabinoids. The products go by a variety of names such as K2, Spice and Spike, and are found in convenience stores and tobacco shops in parts of the country where they're not illegal.

Cannabinoids, natural and synthetic, are versions of the active ingredients in marijuana.

"These products pose serious and significant health risks up to and including death, and they offer nothing positive to anyone ingesting it," said Assembly member Paul Honeman, a former police officer. Assembly members Honeman, Dick Traini and Mike Gutierrez and Mayor Dan Sullivan sponsored the new city law.

State Sen. Kevin Meyer, R-Anchorage, has pre-filed a legislative bill for consideration next year that would criminalize such products on a statewide basis.

In Anchorage, it will be a misdemeanor to sell, make, have or use products containing cannabinoids starting on Jan. 6.

The Anchorage School District made public its fears about use of the synthetic chemical last April, and said some Anchorage teens have been hospitalized. In October, school district spokeswoman Heidi Embley said regular marijuana is still much more prevalent, and that the district knew of probably only a handful of synthetic cannabinoid cases.