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**MAYOR DE BLASIO, SPEAKER MARK-VIVERITO, AND HEALTH  
COMMISSIONER BASSETT ANNOUNCE 85 PERCENT REDUCTION IN K2  
RELATED EMERGENCY VISITS**

*Decrease followed stricter City laws, multi-agency enforcement efforts, and public awareness campaign*

**NEW YORK**—Mayor Bill de Blasio, City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, New York City Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett and Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) First Deputy Commissioner Alba Pico today announced an 85 percent decline in synthetic cannabinoid-related emergency department visits since July 2015, when the Health Department raised the alarm about a dangerous increase in the number of New Yorkers admitted in emergency rooms due to the use of this dangerous drug, commonly known as K2.

“Working collaboratively with City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, the NYPD and our Health Department, our city responded quickly to the threat of synthetic cannabinoids, and we will continue to send a clear message that K2 and other substances like it have no place in New York City,” said **Mayor de Blasio**. “The drop in emergency department visits is a clear sign that our strategy is working, and that fewer New Yorkers are being harmed by this dangerous and deadly drug.”

Reductions in emergency department visits followed a multi-agency enforcement strategy to remove K2 products from stores. Enforcement actions, required by the City Council, and led by the NYPD Civil Enforcement Unit and the Departments of Health and Consumer Affairs (DCA) began in July of last year, and are ongoing.

Enforcement efforts have been focused on neighborhoods with disproportionately high rates of K2-related ED visits.

“The dangerous proliferation of K2 in our communities, especially in my district in East Harlem, required decisive and immediate action. Thanks to the Council's legislation mandating stiffer penalties for the sale of K2 products and robust enforcement efforts by the City, we now see a dramatic 85 percent reduction in K2 related emergencies. This harmful drug has no place on our streets; I thank the City for working with us to end the K2 epidemic. In conjunction with interagency meetings with residents and community stakeholders, the City is effectively

responding to a broad array of quality of life concerns on 125th street,” said **City Council Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito**.

“Protecting the health of New Yorkers has been the priority of all of our efforts on synthetic cannabinoids,” said **Health Commissioner Dr. Mary T. Bassett**. “We’re encouraged that reducing sales of K2 and increasing public awareness have led to an 85 percent reduction in K2-related emergencies. We will continue to work to reduce the health consequences of K2.”

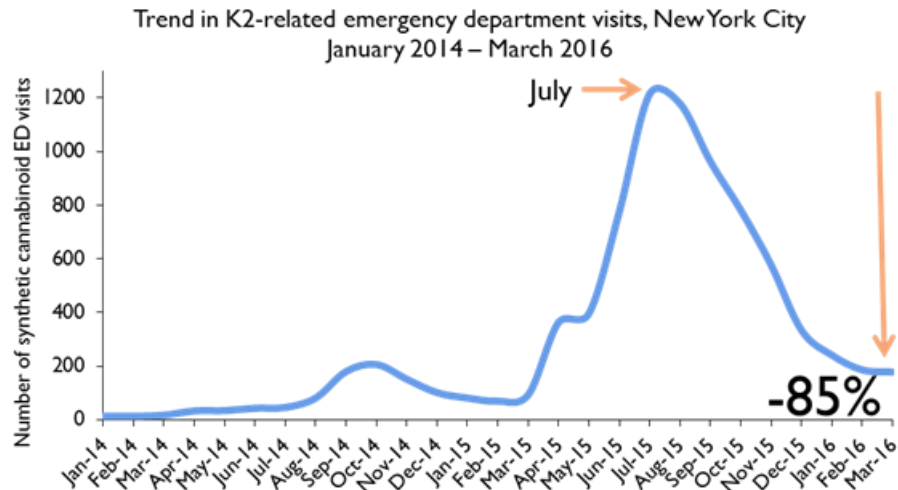
“Last year, this administration took the bold step of banning the manufacture and sale of K2, or ‘synthetic marijuana’, a drug that can have serious side effects including vomiting, seizures, or death. We know that the previous increase in emergency room and intensive care unit visits was related to an increase of usage of this substance, and today we are proud to announce that bold, collaborative action has led to a reduction in related hospital visits. New York City has a long commitment to public health, and our multi-agency strategy to address K2 is yet another example of our dedication to the health of New Yorkers and the health of every community in this city,” said **Dr. Herminia Palacio, Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services**.

“NYC Health + Hospitals has taken a very active role in reducing K2 usage, managing patients in our hospitals, contributing to the Administration’s task force on K2 and also hosting numerous community education forums throughout the City,” said **Dr. Ram Raju, President and CEO of NYC Health + Hospitals**. “It’s good to see those efforts pay off. Since mid-September there has been an 80 percent reduction in K2 patients at our emergency rooms.”

“This dramatic reduction in emergency room visits due to K2 is a positive sign that the city’s efforts to eliminate this poison are working”, said **Police Commissioner William J. Bratton**. “Our interagency task force has clearly been successful in its targeting of the demand for and supply of this dangerous drug compound. We will continue to take action against the stores that deal in K2 as well as other illicit products that jeopardize health and contribute to crime and public nuisance.”

“The data is clear: New York City’s coordinated effort to drive down production, sale and use of this dangerous drug is working,” said **Elizabeth Glazer, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice**. “The City remains committed to eliminating any remnants of K2 sales, and will continue to engage in targeted enforcement, strategic regulation and health monitoring efforts to reduce the dangers of K2.”

“We are heartened to see the dramatic drop in emergency room visits since we joined together to do all we can to get this cheap and deadly drug off our streets and educate New Yorkers about how dangerous it is,” said **DCA First Deputy Commissioner Alba Pico**. “We made sure every cigarette seller knew they faced a year in jail and heavy fines for selling K2. Under Mayor de Blasio’s leadership, we are dramatically reducing the fines to small businesses, but in public health emergencies, we don’t hesitate to act to protect New Yorkers.”



*Source: New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, Bureau of Alcohol, Drug Use Prevention, Care and Treatment, Syndromic Surveillance, synthetic cannabinoid syndrome, 01/01/14 - 3/31/16*

“This reduction in the number of K2-related emergency room visits demonstrates that New York City has substantially diminished the threat of a poisonous drug to our community,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric L. Adams**. “I commend Mayor de Blasio, Council Speaker Mark-Viverito, Health Commissioner Bassett and Department of Consumer Affairs First Deputy Commissioner Pico for their commitment to educating the public and holding stores accountable for selling this poison. I look forward to continuing to work with these stakeholders to ensure this reduction becomes permanent.”

"It's a relief to see this dramatic decline in K2-related emergencies," said **Manhattan Borough President Gale A. Brewer**. "I commend Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Mark-Viverito, and our city health and enforcement agencies for working against the proliferation of this new family of dangerous substances."

“K2 is an extremely dangerous substance and I am proud of the work we have done as a City to reduce its use and availability. An 85 percent drop in K2 related emergency visits proves that our coordinated multiagency efforts have worked, and I commend our partners at the NYPD, DCA, and DOHMH for their diligence in increasing public awareness, getting the substance off of our streets, and potentially saving lives. I thank Mayor de Blasio, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, and Health Commissioner Dr. Mary Bassett for recognizing the need to combat the use and sale of K2 and thank them for their leadership,” said **Council Member Vanessa Gibson, Chair of the Committee on Public Safety**.

“The numbers are clear – K2 is losing its hold on New York City. Local precincts have reported to me that the use of K2 is down in former hotspots, and businesses aren’t willing to risk losing their license to continue selling such a dangerous product. The measures taken by the city to combat the K2 epidemic are working,” said **Council Member Rafael L. Espinal, Jr., Chair of the Committee on Consumer Affairs**.

"This is progress. The City has taken a serious, multi-pronged approach to this problem, harnessing the resources of multiple agencies, and I am pleased to see that emergency room visits are trending in the right direction," said **Council Member Daniel Garodnick**.

"Just a year ago, our city's hospitals were being overrun by a wave of patients ailing from the symptoms of synthetic cannabinoid use. This Council answered the call to preserve the health and safety of its fellow New Yorkers by passing legislation that armed DOHMH and partner agencies with the tools necessary to choke-off the synthetic drug pipeline, and educate citizens about the serious harm these substances cause. Today, we can declare with absolute certainty that those efforts have produced tangible results, and far fewer people are being exposed to such risk. As a legislator, there can be no greater reward than to know that lives have been saved," said **Council Member Ruben Wills**.

In October 2015, the City Council passed, and Mayor de Blasio signed into law, a new law to apply stronger penalties for sellers and manufactures of the K2 products. The sale of K2 now carries stiff civil and criminal penalties in New York City. Retailers who sell K2 in violation of the new law also face suspension or revocation of their Cigarette Retail Dealer license.

Since July, the City, through several multi-agency enforcement actions, has inspected nearly 30 businesses and seized more than 10,000 packets of K2. DCA has issued, and will continue to pursue, violations for inadequate and misleading labeling.

The Health Department and DCA launched a public awareness campaign last November addressing the health risks associated with the use of K2. Ads were placed on bus shelters, telephone kiosks, and in local businesses in communities with the highest rates of emergency department visits due to K2 use. Mailings were sent to over 7,000 retailers, reminding them that sale of K2 is illegal and unsafe. Educational materials were distributed to the Department of Homeless Services, elected officials, community-based organizations, and providers serving populations most at risk for adverse reactions.

Additionally, last November, nearly 200 City and nonprofit employees including first responders, judges, social service providers and law enforcement officials were convened for a half-day K2 summit and best practices for combating its sale and use.

East Harlem has been the focus of a two-year interagency effort, led by Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito and the Office of the Mayor, to address quality of life concerns through targeted neighborhood support teams. Through monthly community meetings with residents, local stakeholders and City agencies, East Harlem has seen significant improvements in street cleanliness, public safety and health services – including dramatically reducing the sale and consumption of K2.

Information for consumers and retailers is available in multiple languages at [nyc.gov/K2](http://nyc.gov/K2). Providers can educate patients about the effects of synthetic cannabinoids. People in need of help to stop or reduce K2 use can find help at: at 1-800-LIFENET or visit [nyc.gov/K2](http://nyc.gov/K2).

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