



Alert from the NDEWS Web Monitoring Team: Online mentions of Pentobarbital/Phenobarbital

What was found? 5kg of pentobarbital were seized in southern Texas according to a recent DEA news release. Pentobarbital/phenobarbital discussions on Reddit have seen an increase for several years, as well as a more pronounced spike since late 2023.

What is Pentobarbital? Pentobarbital is a short-acting barbiturate. In the past it has been used as a sedative, to control convulsions, and for short-term treatment of insomnia. It has also been used in some US states for lethal injections, as well as by other countries, such as the Netherlands, for physician-assisted suicide.

What is Phenobarbital? Phenobarbital is also a barbiturate. It is most frequently used as an epilepsy treatment in developing countries, as well as a veterinary medicine in developed countries. It is also occasionally used to treat sleep and anxiety disorders and substance withdrawal symptoms.

How is it being discussed? The discussion almost exclusively revolves around the use of either substance for suicide. Commenters are particularly interested in how to acquire these substances, how to make sure they are authentic, and what additional actions need to be taken to ensure suicide. The discussion primarily revolves around the proper dosage and potential health issues. Primary discussion of recreational use revolves around using small amounts of phenobarbital for opioid-like effects. Reddit users were willing to pay high amounts of money for phenobarbital/pentobarbital compared to typical novel psychoactive substances observed on the site.

Drug Terms Searched: Pentobarbital, phenobarbital, pentobarbitone, phenobarbitone, phenobarb, yellow jacket, Nembutal, Luminal