Summer festivals turned lethal by popular drug trend
State’s poison center experiencing surge in calls related to dangerous “party” drugs

(Chicago) July 24, 2013- With Lollapalooza less than two weeks away, the Illinois Poison Center (IPC) is warning of a growing trend involving the use of hallucinogenic amphetamines, such as Ecstasy or Molly, at summer concerts and festivals. Since June, the IPC, the state’s first responder during exposures to potentially harmful substances, has reported 25 overdose cases and one death related to the use of these drugs. The Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) reported nearly 250 ambulance runs from Lollapalooza last year, a majority of which were drug-related.

“We receive more calls from July to September, the height of summer festival season, then from January to June combined,” said Dr. Michael Wahl, IPC Medical Director. “Drug dealers are targeting teens and young adults at festivals, concerts and ‘rave’ parties, placing them in a great deal of danger. With more than 40 summer festivals still ahead, it is very likely we will see more cases involving these drugs.”

Use of these drugs may result in hallucinations, fast heart rate, increased blood pressure, nausea, vomiting, agitation and seizures. In severe cases, users may experience an elevated temperature, kidney or liver failure, uncontrolled bleeding, coma or possible death.

“Taking these drugs in the heat can increase the possibility of dehydration, but more importantly, can contribute to very high body temperatures which can be life-threatening,” said Wahl.

While Illinois serves as a national example in the fight against designer and synthetic drugs, overdoses involving hallucinogenic amphetamines and other substances continue to pose significant danger across the state. Earlier this year, the IPC reported a cluster of cases linked to the growing popularity of hallucinogenic amines, dangerous psychedelics that cause mind-altering effects similar to those of LSD. Over the Fourth of July weekend, McHenry county officials reported two overdose cases involving synthetic marijuana.

“Although our work with the Illinois Attorney General’s office and local law enforcement officials has made great strides in reducing retail synthetic drug use and sales in our state, this latest surge in calls proves we still have plenty of work ahead to keep these dangerous substances off of our streets,” said Wahl.

Click here for the IPC’s white paper report on synthetic and designer drugs.

IPC experts are available 24 hours per day, 7 days a week to answer questions and provide expert treatment advice regarding exposures to drugs and other harmful substances. If you or someone you know has been exposed to a potentially harmful substance, please call the Illinois Poison Center at 1-800-222-1222.

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