



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Billy J. Williams  
District of Oregon

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CONTACT: KEVIN SONOFF

PHONE: (503) 727-1185

[KEVIN.SONOFF@USDOJ.GOV](mailto:KEVIN.SONOFF@USDOJ.GOV)

## **OPIOID PROSECUTIONS LEAD TO SEIZURE OF THREE MILLION USER DOSES OF HEROIN, OXYCODONE AND FENTANYL ACROSS OREGON**

*Narcotic seizures are among the largest in District of Oregon history*

PORTLAND, Ore.—U.S. Attorney Billy J. Williams announced today that since the beginning of May 2018, federal law enforcement authorities and their task force partners have prosecuted cases resulting in the seizure of 158 pounds of heroin, 600 grams of oxycodone, and half a pound of fentanyl.

Combined, the seizures remove nearly three million individual user doses from statewide distribution networks. The enforcement effort has already netted 19 arrests, 17 guilty pleas and nine criminal sentencing of active drug traffickers with numerous cases still pending.

“The opioid addiction crisis continues to impact millions of Americans every year, many of whom have lost loved ones or continue to watch as their friends or family members struggle with addiction,” said Billy J. Williams, U.S. Attorney for the District of Oregon. “Bringing this crisis to an end requires all Americans—law enforcement and public health officials as well as ordinary citizens—to take action. Visit [www.linesforlife.org](http://www.linesforlife.org) or another addiction support organization to learn how you can make a difference in your community.”

“The numbers are heart wrenching,” said Keith Weis, DEA Special Agent in Charge for the Pacific Northwest. “In a time of unprecedented health risks facing our society, we must respond aggressively head-on in a multi-faceted, community-based strategy that includes law enforcement, prevention and treatment specialists all working hand in hand to help our most vulnerable members facing life or death struggles against addiction. Every person lost in this opioid crisis is one too many.”

“Opioid abuse in Oregon involves a dangerous cocktail of street drugs (such as heroin and fentanyl) and prescription meds (such as oxycodone, hydrocodone, and morphine). Whether a person starts down the path to addiction on the street or in a doctor's office, the result is equally devastating to the victim's family and community. Because the impact is so significant, the FBI and our partners are prioritizing our work to identify the dealers and doctors who are driving this epidemic,” said Renn Cannon, Special Agent in Charge of the FBI in Oregon.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drug overdoses killed a record 72,000 Americans in 2017. In 2016, 66% of the more than 66,000 overdose deaths involved an opioid. Drug overdose is now the leading cause of death in the U.S. In 2017, the CDC estimated the national economic burden of prescription opioid overdose, abuse, and dependence at \$78.5 billion annually.

In Oregon, the total number of deaths related to drug use increased 11 percent from 2013 to 2017, with 546 drug related deaths in 2017 alone. The use of prescription opioids in Oregon continues to grow dramatically. Nearly half of the prescriptions filled at Oregon retail pharmacies in 2017 were for opioids. As a result, Oregon has one of the highest rates of prescription opioid misuse in the country, with an average of three deaths every week from prescription opioid overdose.

On November 2, 2018, DEA [released](#) its 2018 National Drug Threat Assessment. The report paints a bleak picture of the state of drug abuse in the U.S. According to the report, controlled prescription drugs are responsible for the largest number of overdose deaths of any illicit drug class and have been since 2011. Between 2013 and 2016, heroin deaths nearly doubled, exacerbated by the increased adulteration of heroin with fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. Of all opioids, the abuse of illicit fentanyl and other synthetic opioids has led to the greatest number of deaths.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Oregon works in partnership with federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies to investigate and prosecute drug trafficking cases involving opioids. Recent prosecutions include:

*U.S. v. Brett Allen McNeal*

Brett Allen McNeal was the final Oregon defendant sentenced for distributing oxycodone as part of a large, interstate opioid-trafficking organization. He was sentenced to three months in federal prison on October 2, 2018.

The organization was structured around Daniel Cham, a doctor practicing in La Puente, California, who would illegally provide prescriptions for oxycodone, hydrocodone, and other powerful medications in exchange money orders and cash. The narcotics were moved from Southern California through a network of redistributors for eventual sale in Oregon.

Cham would write prescriptions to individuals both known and unknown to him and to others he knew to be prolific drug dealers and addicts. He regularly sold prescriptions to John Bryden, an Oregon resident, who in turn would sell them to other co-conspirators, including Kevin Grimes, Marcela Cooper, and Austin Alderete, for distribution across Oregon.

McNeal purchased oxycodone from Alderete and sold it for a profit to end users. One of those end users, Jessica Morretti, died of an overdose on April 13, 2012. According to text messages on Moretti's cell phone from the evening she overdosed, McNeal had provided her with five 30mg oxycodone pills the same day.

Cham was sentenced on March 14, 2018 in the Central District of California to more than 13 years in federal prison.

This case was investigated by the FBI.

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*U.S. v. Christian Jense Chaidez*

Christian Jense Chaidez was sentenced to 120 months in federal prison on September 4, 2018 for trafficking heroin and other narcotics into Oregon for distribution in the Salem, Oregon metropolitan area. Chaidez was a local affiliate of a Los Angeles, California-based drug trafficking network.

Using intercepted wire calls, investigators learned that a co-defendant would provide Chaidez with quantities of heroin that Chaidez would, in turn, sell in and around Salem. In November and December 2016 investigators used an undercover informant to purchase one half pound of methamphetamine from Chaidez on two different occasions.

By June 2017, when federal prosecutors unsealed a 12-person indictment, the network, which began primarily as a methamphetamine and cocaine distribution organization, was rapidly expanding into the heroin market. The arrests of Chaidez and others have significantly disrupted the distribution of methamphetamine, cocaine, and other narcotics in the Salem area.

This case was investigated by DEA.

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*U.S. v. Christopher James Fleet*

On September 4, 2018, Christopher James Fleet, 23, of Portland, was sentenced to 84 months in federal prison and five years of supervised release for possessing distribution quantities of methamphetamine and two firearms.

On August 23, 2017, deputies from the Multnomah County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) Special Investigation Unit were conducting surveillance at a known drug and gang house in Portland. They observed a vehicle parked in front of the house they believed was connected with Fleet, a drug dealer with an outstanding arrest warrant. Upon leaving the house and attempting to drive away, deputies blocked Fleet using unmarked vehicles and approached him wearing marked law enforcement raid vests. After initially refusing to comply with the deputy's commands to raise his hands and failing to find an escape route, Fleet surrendered.

During the arrest, deputies found a Kel Tec 9mm firearm and distribution quantities of heroin and methamphetamine on Fleet's person. They also found a locked backpack in Fleet's vehicle. The backpack was later found to contain .40 caliber Sig Sauer pistol, drug records, and a digital scale.

This case was investigated by the MCSO Special Investigation Unit.

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The Department of Justice has been resolute in its fight to end the opioid addiction crisis. All 94 U.S. Attorney's Offices have an opioid action plan with strategies specific to their districts. The department has assigned more than 300 federal prosecutors to U.S. Attorney's Offices and hired more than 400 DEA task force officers.

In July 2018, the department [announced](#) the formation of Operation Synthetic Opioid Surge (S.O.S) that seeks to reduce the supply of deadly synthetic opioids in high impact areas. In August 2018, the department and DEA [proposed](#) decreases in manufacturing quotas for the six most frequently misused opioids for 2019. In October 2018, the department [announced](#) grant awards totaling more than \$320 million dollars to help those most impacted by the opioid crisis including crime victims, children, families and first responders.

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