

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



City of Duluth - Police Department

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DATE: 11/8/2023 12:00:00 AM

SUBJECT: Duluth Surpasses Number of Opioid-Related Fatal Overdoses this Year Compared to 2022

BY: Mattie Hjelseth, Duluth Police Department Public Information Officer

NATURE OF INCIDENT:

CASE NO.:

INCIDENT DATE:

Duluth Surpasses Number of Opioid-Related Fatal Overdoses this Year Compared to 2022

As of 11/7/2023, the Duluth Police Department has responded to 37 opioid-related fatal overdoses, surpassing the total amount of fatal opioid-related overdoses that occurred in 2022 (35). This number represents an 11-year-high, or a 3,600% increase in opioid-related fatal overdoses (2013 to current), and an 11-year-high, or an 873.81% increase in opioid-related overdoses (2013 to current) within the City of Duluth. We want to urge those in our community to access the many resources that are available within the City of Duluth to prevent opioid-related fatal overdoses.

The Duluth Police Department along with the Lake Superior Violent Offender Task Force (LSVOTF) continues to work tirelessly to hold dealers accountable who bring these opioids into our community and victimize those who suffer from Substance Use Disorders. The LSVOTF has seized a record number of opioid (fentanyl) pills, powder fentanyl, and meth already this year.

“DPD uses a holistic approach of enforcement, education/prevention, and recovery to provide resources to those suffering from Substance Use Disorders,” said Lieutenant Dave Drozdowski. “Resources include recovery support services, mental health services, and harm reduction services such as access to free fentanyl test strips and Narcan.”

Fentanyl can be present in any drug and is an opioid that has become a major contributor to both fatal and nonfatal overdoses in the United States. The use of fentanyl test strips, which detect the presence of fentanyl, ensures safer usage of any type of drug and helps prevent opioid-related overdoses. These strips are free and can be accessed at the Clearpath Clinic in CADT (1402 E Superior St), Harm Reduction Sisters (206 W 4th St), and Rural AIDS Action Network (31 W 1st St).

Narcan is an opioid-reversal drug. You can access free Narcan and become trained in its use by going to Harm Reduction Sisters (206 W 4th St) or Rural AIDS Action Network (31 W 1st St). As of November 7, 2023, the Duluth Police Department administered Narcan 110 times, 105 of which Narcan saved the individual from fatally overdosing.

“What we all can do is get trained in the use of Narcan. Carry it on you and use it when you need it,” said Jess McCarthy, COSSAP Project Coordinator. “If you or a loved one is struggling with opioid use, know you’re not alone, even though you might feel that way. There are people ready to help.”

DPD recognizes there are many people who suffer from Substance Use Disorders in our community and we encourage and support them to seek the multiple harm reduction services provided in our area. A few other harm reduction services the St. Louis County Public Health and Human Services wants to remind individuals include; not using alone, injecting slowly, testing each new batch with test strips, choosing smoking over injecting, using lower doses, and carrying Narcan.

Minnesota’s “Steve’s Law” provides limited immunity for the individual overdosing, as well as the person calling 911. Do not let fear of prosecution keep you from calling 911 in an overdose event. Additionally, the National Overdose Prevention Life Line is a resource that can be accessed by going to neverusealone.com or calling 1-(800)-484-373.

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