

Authorities say user led to fentanyl arrests - Woman found in car on Detroit street helped point to alleged source of drug that has killed 133.

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DETROIT -- A suburban woman found earlier this month with a syringe in her arm -- slumped unconscious over the steering wheel of her car on a Highland Park street -- was a breakthrough in investigators' around-the-clock search for the source of heroin laced with **fentanyl** that has killed 133 people since last September.

The woman recovered and information she provided allowed investigators **to** work their way up the heroin- **fentanyl** drug chain, leading **to** the Thursday morning **arrest** of Darien Rees, 45. **Authorities** believe Rees was the supplier for a major street sales outlet in the Jefferies housing project on the east side of John Lodge Freeway.

Rees was arrested by deputies and agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration in his 2006 Cadillac, allegedly on his way **to** making a delivery at the housing project, said Wayne County Sheriff Warren C. Evans.

Investigators said they found Rees carrying a large prescription bottle containing 80 individual foil-wrapped packets of the heroin- **fentanyl** mixture. The packets were sold for \$10 **to** \$20 under the street names "magic" or "A-1," Evans said.

"The **fentanyl** we obtained in our undercover purchases was packaged in the same aluminum foil as the **fentanyl** on the individual (Rees) that we arrested and we are very comfortable they are one and the same," Evans said.

Wayne County Executive Robert Ficano warned that Rees' **arrest** does not mean the danger of overdose is lessened.

"Thinking that it is safe now because a dealer has been taken off the street is ludicrous," Ficano said.

"We have been putting the message out that overdose, not only with **fentanyl** but overdose with cocaine or heroin is going **to** be lethal, and that is proven by the statistics."

Wayne County averages two **to** three overdose deaths a day and had more than 400 last year, Ficano said. The 70 **fentanyl** -related deaths last year represented 17 percent of the fatal overdoses. Investigators had Rees under surveillance for several days. His daily routine was **to** leave his apartment on Elijah McCoy in the mornings and drive **to** the nearby Woodbridge development at the Jefferies housing project, where he would deliver the drugs **to** sellers, Evans said.

Deputies arrested a second man on Thursday who earlier had sold the mixed drugs **to** an undercover deputy. A third man was arrested a day earlier.

Evans said state and federal investigators are trying **to** link Rees and the others arrested with the sale of drugs that killed the purchasers almost immediately.

Rees was charged with three counts of delivery and manufacturing of narcotics, delivery of marijuana, felon in possession of a firearm, possession of body armor, and four counts of felony firearm possession. The charges carry maximum penalties of 86 years in prison and/or fines of \$777,000.

Evans said five people, including the two on Thursday, have been arrested in the investigation, which is ongoing.

"Many of the drug buyers we have observed throughout this investigation are residents of suburban communities that come **to** this location **to** buy drugs," Evans said.

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