

# Smokeable crank worries officials

Violence-producing drug may become more popular, authorities fear

SACRAMENTO (McClatchy) — While crack has garnered most of the notoriety, its made-in-the-USA cousin — crank — is spreading fast with violent and destructive results.

Crank, also called speed and crystal meth, is a street name for the synthetic stimulant methamphetamine. Like crack — a highly potent form of cocaine — crank is highly addictive but the euphoria it produces lasts longer.

Both crack and crank are white powdery substances sold on the street in quarter-gram doses in envelopes for \$25 to \$35. They are inhaled through the nose or injected.

Now comes a new danger: Federal officials said that users are experimenting with a "smokeable" form of crank. Crack became an epidemic when cocaine was turned into rock cocaine that could be easily

smoked.

Officials worry the same thing could happen with crank.

"It's possible it might take off," said Robert Sager, director of the Drug Enforcement Administration's lab in San Francisco. "Can't tell what will happen until we see how the users react. They may not like it. Let's hope it doesn't take off because we are just swamped with the old stuff now."

Methamphetamine abuse has been around for years, beginning more than three decades ago with diet pills dispensed by doctors. It was once known primarily as a blue collar and outlaw biker drug.

Crystal meth was blamed by one national magazine with ending San Francisco's psychedelic scene in 1969 by turning the Haight "from weeds and beads to crystals and pistols."

Heroin later became popular among many addicts in the 1970s, and it was not until about five years ago that stimulants, which really never totally disappeared, made a strong comeback.

Crank's comeback arrived on the coattails of the crack explosion.

Sheriff's deputies use the term

"cranker violence" to describe wired lawbreakers high on runs of methamphetamine.

"It is a real stimulant," said Sacramento homicide chief Lt. Ray Biondi. "Those on the stuff tend to be very erratic and violent. They do crazy and stupid things, including murder. ... It is the poor man's cocaine."