December 2001

Wyoming

Drug Threat Assessment

National Drug Intelligence Center
U.S. Department of Justice

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Preface

This report is a strategic assessment that addresses the status and outlook of the drug threat to Wyoming. Analytical judgment determined the threat posed by each drug type or category, taking into account the most current quantitative and qualitative information on availability, demand, production or cultivation, transportation, and distribution, as well as the effects of a particular drug on abusers and society as a whole. While NDIC sought to incorporate the latest available information, a time lag often exists between collection and publication of data, particularly demand-related data sets. NDIC anticipates that this drug threat assessment will be useful to policymakers, law enforcement personnel, and treatment providers at the federal, state, and local levels because it draws upon a broad range of information sources to describe and analyze the drug threat to Wyoming.

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Wyoming Drug Threat Assessment

Executive Summary

Mexican criminal groups dominate the production, transportation, and distribution of most illicit drugs in Wyoming. These groups are the primary transporters and distributors of methamphetamine, marijuana, and cocaine at the wholesale level. They transport illegal drugs to Wyoming primarily via the interstate highway system and, to a lesser extent, commercial air carriers and package delivery services. Local independent dealers dominate the retail distribution of methamphetamine, while Mexican criminal groups dominate the retail distribution of marijuana and powdered and crack cocaine.

Methamphetamine is the most significant drug threat to Wyoming and is the drug-investigative priority for federal, state, and local law enforcement officials. Authorities continue to report that a significant number of individuals are treated annually for methamphetamine abuse. Law enforcement officials report that Mexico-produced methamphetamine is the most common type available. Methamphetamine produced in California by Mexican criminal groups is also readily available, and high-purity methamphetamine produced in small quantities in Wyoming is also of great concern. The number of methamphetamine laboratory seizures has increased since 1996. Mexican criminal groups transport multipound quantities of the drug from Mexico as well as California and other western states to Wyoming for distribution.

Marijuana is the drug of choice in Wyoming. Most of the marijuana seized in the state is produced in Mexico. High-potency marijuana also is produced locally, primarily indoors and in small quantities. Local independent dealers distribute locally produced marijuana. Law enforcement agencies continue to devote resources to eradication and suppression activities.

Cocaine abuse in Wyoming remains stable at relatively low levels. Powdered cocaine and crack cocaine are seized in the state, although not in significant quantities. Law enforcement agencies throughout Wyoming report that Mexican criminal groups control the transportation as well as wholesale distribution of powdered cocaine and the retail distribution of powdered and crack cocaine in Wyoming.

The Drug Enforcement Administration and the Wyoming Department of Criminal Investigation do not consider **heroin** a significant threat to Wyoming. Public treatment statistics indicate that there is a limited user population. Mexican black tar heroin is the most common type available in Wyoming. Typically, users travel to cities including

Denver, Colorado, and Salt Lake City, Utah, to purchase personal-use quantities and may sell a portion of their purchase to fellow abusers.

Other dangerous drugs pose the least significant drug threat to Wyoming. However, Wyoming law enforcement agencies are concerned about the increasing use of LSD, GHB, MDMA, and psilocybin by young people at clubs and raves. MDMA and other club drugs are transported from the larger cities of Colorado and increasingly are available in Wyoming, particularly in the southeastern corner of the state. Inhalant abuse among youth is very high, and Wyoming currently has no laws governing the sale to minors of products commonly used as inhalants. Diverted pharmaceuticals are not widely abused in Wyoming, although state and local officials are watchful for a potential increase in the abuse of the prescription painkiller OxyContin.

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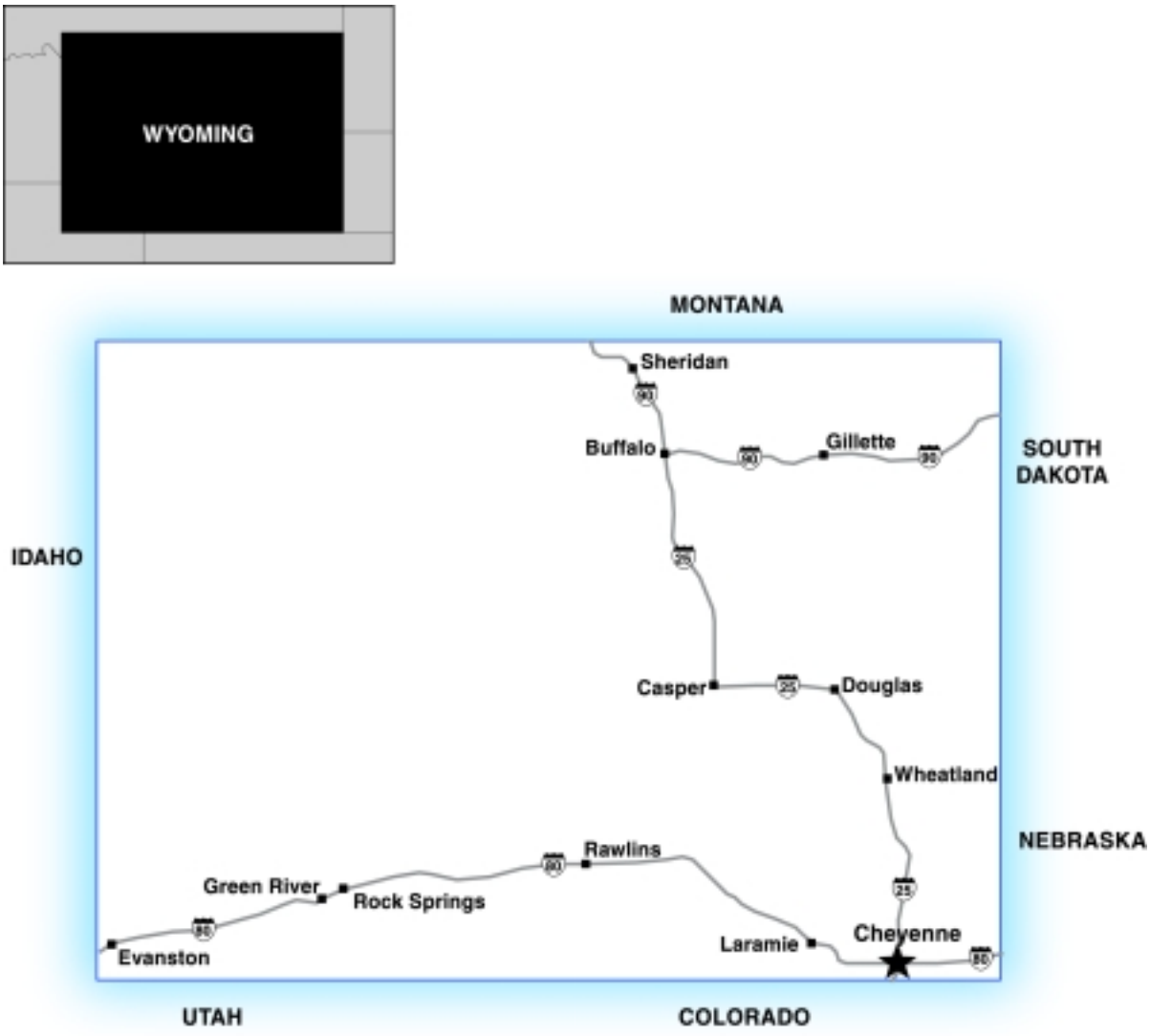

Wyoming.

Note: This map displays features mentioned in the report.

Wyoming
Drug Threat Assessment

Overview

Wyoming is the least populated state in the nation, with slightly fewer than 500,000 residents. Its population is 92.1 percent Caucasian, 3.2 percent Hispanic, 2.3 percent Native American, 0.9 percent Pacific Islander or other, 0.8 percent African American, and 0.6 percent Asian. With a land area of nearly 98,000 square miles, Wyoming has a population density of about five persons per square mile.

Wyoming is a rural state with diverse geographical features that include the Rocky Mountains and the Great Plains. Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, and Utah border Wyoming. Grand Teton and Yellowstone National Parks, located in Wyoming's northwestern corner, contain some of America's most extreme terrain. Cheyenne, located in Wyoming's southeastern corner, is the capital and largest city.

Wyoming's interstate highways facilitate illicit drug transportation and distribution. Interstate 25 extends from the Southwest Border near Las Cruces, New Mexico, and intersects I-70 in Denver, Colorado, and I-80 (an east-west route extending from the San Francisco area to New Jersey) in Cheyenne, Wyoming. In Wyoming, I-25 traverses north through Casper and intersects I-90 near Buffalo. The state connects with Montana to the north and South Dakota to the east via I-90. Wyoming cities along these interstates include Casper, Cheyenne, Evanston, Green River, Laramie, Rock Springs, Sheridan, and Wheatland. Mexican criminal groups use private vehicles, commercial trucks, and commercial buses to transport illicit drugs into Wyoming on these interstates.

Fast Facts

Wyoming	
Population (2000)	493,782
U.S. population ranking	50th
Median household income (2000)	$39,026
Unemployment rate (2001)	3.8%
Land area	97,818 square miles 253,347 square kilometers
Capital	Cheyenne
Other principal cities	Casper, Laramie, Rock Springs
Number of counties	23
Principal industries	Mineral extraction, oil, natural gas, tourism, agriculture

The Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI) coordinates six multiagency drug

task forces, known as Regional Enforcement Teams. These task forces are strategically located throughout the state and are composed primarily of state and local law enforcement officers. Special agents from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Casper Post of Duty and the Cheyenne Resident Office work closely with these Regional Enforcement Teams. Wyoming, as well as Colorado and Utah, is part of the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA).

The 2000 Uniform Crime Report (UCR) indicates that drug-related crime increased in Wyoming from 1999 to 2000. Law enforcement agencies reporting UCR data included 23 sheriff's offices and 43 police departments with jurisdiction over 98.6 percent of Wyoming's population. The UCR shows that drug violation increases from 1999 to 2000 were highest among juvenile females—from 106 to 122 violations—and adult males—from 1,381 to 1,479 violations. Drug violations by juvenile males decreased more than 19 percent, from 448 in 1999 to 362 in 2000. Among adult offenders, the largest increases were in the categories of drug possession by females—from 254 violations in 1999 to 301 in 2000—and drug manufacture and sales by males—from 172 in 1999 to 195 violations in 2000.

Law enforcement authorities often discover firearms while executing search warrants and making drug-related arrests. Authorities seize most firearms inside residences; however, some are seized from motor vehicles or from arrestees. The Wyoming DCI reported that there were 150 firearms seized statewide in drug-related arrests in 1998; 109 seized in 1999; 83 seized in 2000; and 113 seized through July 2001.

The most recent drug abuse indicators in Wyoming are slightly higher than the national averages in several categories. The 1999 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) indicates that 7.3 percent of Wyoming residents reported past month use of any illicit drug in 1999, compared with 6.7 percent nationwide. In Wyoming, 5.8 percent of residents reported past month marijuana use compared with 5.2 percent nationwide, and 3.2 percent of residents reported past month use of any other drug, compared with 3 percent nationwide. High school students in Wyoming were surveyed as part of the 1999 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), which measures drug abuse among high school students. The YRBS shows that Wyoming students who responded to the survey reported higher substance abuse levels than their peers nationwide in 10 of 14 categories. These categories include, but are not limited to, lifetime tobacco, alcohol, cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, and inhalant use.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine has been the primary drug threat to Wyoming since the mid-1990s. It is the drug-investigative priority for federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies throughout the state. While Mexico-produced methamphetamine predominates in Wyoming, methamphetamine produced in California by Mexican criminal groups also is available. Moreover, locally produced methamphetamine is readily available in many areas of the state. Since 1996, in-state seizures of methamphetamine laboratories capable of producing ounce to pound quantities have risen sharply. Although the price of methamphetamine is comparable to that of powdered cocaine, demand for methamphetamine is greater because it is more readily available and produces longer-lasting effects than cocaine. Mexican criminal groups dominate wholesale distribution of Mexico-produced methamphetamine and methamphetamine that is produced in California by Mexican criminal groups, while local independent dealers dominate retail distribution.

Abuse

Serious physical effects related to methamphetamine abuse include hyperthermia, convulsions, and cardiovascular collapse. Long-term effects of methamphetamine abuse include kidney complications, lung disorders, brain and liver damage, and blood clots. Paranoia associated with methamphetamine abuse may lead to homicidal and suicidal tendencies.

Treatment admissions for methamphetamine abuse increased overall between 1997 and 1999. Data from the Wyoming Department of Health, Division of Substance Abuse, indicate that public treatment admissions for methamphetamine increased nearly 65 percent, from 231 admissions in 1997 to 381 admissions in 1998. Admissions decreased 18 percent to 312 in 1999.

Data from the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) indicate a similar trend. According to TEDS, admissions to public treatment for methamphetamine abuse increased nearly 52 percent, from 377 in 1997 to 572 in 1998. In 1999 admissions for methamphetamine abuse decreased almost 30 percent to 401 admissions. Disparities between state and federal reporting on admissions to substance abuse treatment programs are likely to occur because of differences in data collection and reporting methodologies. TEDS data indicate that more than 42 percent of patients in treatment for methamphetamine in 1999 were between the ages of 21 and 30. More than 53 percent were male, and 94 percent were Caucasian. Data from the Division of Substance Abuse show that 50 percent of patients in treatment for methamphetamine abuse were aged 19 to 30, more than 53 percent were male, and more than 90 percent were Caucasian.

Methamphetamine poses an increasing threat to youth. The 1999 YRBS indicates that high school students surveyed in Wyoming have a higher rate of methamphetamine abuse than high school students nationwide. Nearly 13 percent of Wyoming respondents reported using methamphetamine at least once in their lifetime, well above the national average of 9 percent. In particular, 12 percent of female and more than 13 percent of male respondents had used methamphetamine compared with 8 percent of female and 10 percent of male respondents nationally. In early 2001 the DEA Cheyenne Resident Office reported that methamphetamine was increasingly abused by teenagers in Wyoming, due to the wide availability, low price, and popularity of the drug.

Until methamphetamine became readily available in the early 1990s, Wyoming had a limited intravenous drug-user population. As methamphetamine use increased, the number of intravenous drug users increased as well. Statistics from the Wyoming Department of Health, Division of Substance Abuse, reveal that 19 percent of patients in public treatment for methamphetamine in 1997 injected the drug. This number increased to 47 percent in 1999. Law enforcement officers frequently discover syringes and intravenous user kits during the execution of search warrants and methamphetamine-related arrests. Exposure to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV), hepatitis, and other diseases transmitted through contact with infected needles is a significant concern to law enforcement and health care personnel.

Few deaths in Wyoming are linked to methamphetamine. According to Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) Medical Examiner (ME) data, since 1997 there has not been a methamphetamine-related death in Casper—the only city in Wyoming that participates in DAWN.

Availability

Methamphetamine is readily available in most areas of Wyoming. Mexico-produced methamphetamine is most readily available; however, methamphetamine produced in California by Mexican criminal groups and, to a lesser extent, locally produced methamphetamine are also available. DCI's Regional Enforcement Teams routinely purchase large quantities of methamphetamine during investigations, indicating a ready supply of the drug. DCI reports that agents routinely "work their way up" from purchasing personal-use quantities to multiounce and multipound quantities from distributors. The availability of methamphetamine is evidence of strong consumer demand in Wyoming. Although the price of methamphetamine is comparable to that of cocaine, methamphetamine is abused more often because it is more readily available and produces a longer-lasting euphoria than cocaine.

Methamphetamine prices have been relatively stable in Wyoming. The DEA Denver Field Division reported that the pound price of methamphetamine decreased in the fourth quarter of fiscal year (FY) 2000, then increased to FY1999 levels in FY2001. According to DEA, the price of methamphetamine in Wyoming as of the second quarter of FY2001 was $7,500 to $10,000 per pound, $1,000 to $1,200 per ounce, and $80 to $100 per gram. (See Table 1.) In the fourth quarter of FY2000 and the first quarter of FY2001 DCI investigators negotiated methamphetamine purchases for as little as $900 per ounce and $80 to $85 per gram.

Distributors in Wyoming realize huge profits from the sale of methamphetamine. According to the Wyoming DCI, 1 pound of 90-percent-pure Mexico-produced methamphetamine can be purchased for as little as $4,000 in the Southwest Border states. The drug can be sold in Wyoming for as much as $10,000—a profit of $6,000. Distributors frequently add MSM (also known as dimethylsulfone or $DMSO_2$)—a nutritional supplement for horses and humans—as a cutting agent to increase the quantity available for retail distribution. Adding 1 pound of these cutting agents to 1 pound of methamphetamine decreases the purity of the drug to approximately 45 percent. The 2 pounds of cut methamphetamine are divided into 32 packages, each containing 1 ounce and selling for approximately $1,000. At the retail level the 32 packages are divided into more than 900 packages, each containing 1 gram and selling for approximately $100. (See Figure 1 on page 5.)

Methamphetamine is seized throughout Wyoming. The Rocky Mountain HIDTA reported that most methamphetamine seizures in 2000 occurred in the northeastern and central areas of the state. Seizures of methamphetamine totaled more than 20 pounds in 2000, a decrease from the almost 29 pounds seized in 1999.

The number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in the state has increased overall since 1997. There were 3 methamphetamine laboratories seized in 1997 by DCI's Regional Enforcement Teams, 12 in 1998, 20 in 1999, and 19 in 2000.

Table 1. Methamphetamine Prices, Wyoming, FY1999–FY2001

Quantity	FY1999	1st–3rd Quarter FY2000	4th Quarter FY2000	1st–2nd Quarter FY2001
Pound	**7,500–10,000**	**7,500–10,000**	**5,000–10,000**	**7,500–10,000**
Ounce	**1,000–1,200**	**1,000–1,200**	**900–1,200**	**1,000–1,200**
Gram	**100**	**80–100**	**80–100**	**80–100**

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration, Denver Field Division, *Trends in Traffic FY1999-FY2001*.

Twelve of the methamphetamine laboratories seized in 2000 were discovered in single-family residences, two in commercial storage locker facilities, and five in vehicles. By August 2001, 24 laboratories had been seized in Wyoming.

Methamphetamine is the primary focus of law enforcement agencies in Wyoming. In 1992 the Wyoming DCI initiated 20 methamphetamine-related investigations. From 1998 through 2000 the DCI initiated 393 methamphetamine-related investigations. Almost 50 percent of the drug-related arrests made by DCI Regional Enforcement Teams in 2000 were for methamphetamine-related offenses. By July 2001, 54 percent of drug-related cases involved methamphetamine. The DEA Cheyenne Resident Office reports that overall methamphetamine-related arrests skyrocketed from 18 percent of total drug-related arrests in 1993 to 58 percent in 1998 and then to 80 percent in 1999. Data from the U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC) indicate that in FY2000, 78 percent (64 sentences) of federal sentences for drug law violations in the federal district of Wyoming were for methamphetamine-related violations.

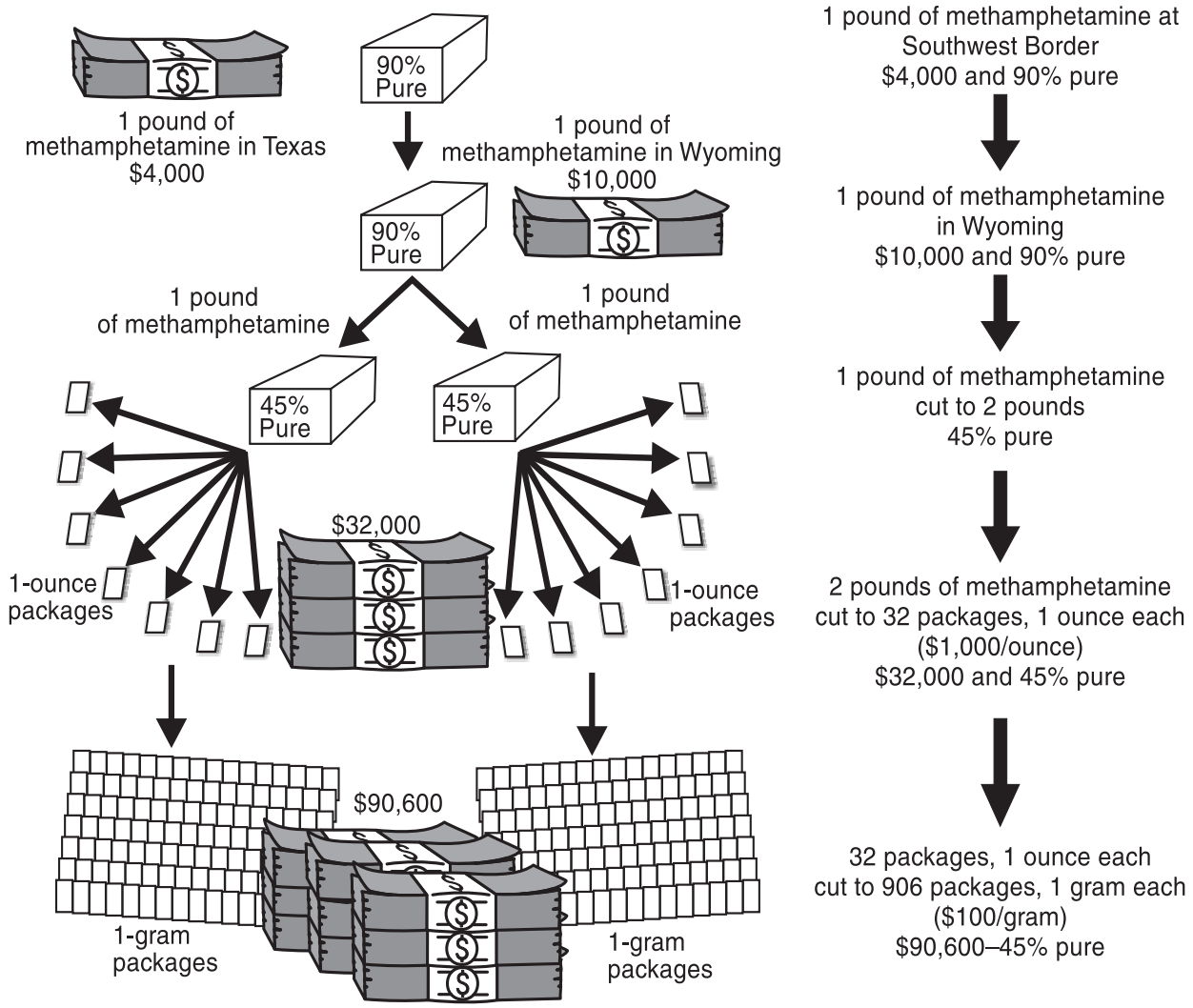

Figure 1. Mexican methamphetamine cutting and packaging

Source: Wyoming DCI.

Drug Ring Investigation Results in Numerous Convictions

In March 2001 federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies completed a 2-year investigation of a Wyoming drug ring, which resulted in the conviction of 16 individuals. Between November 1999 and March 2000 this criminal group distributed several pounds of methamphetamine as well as cocaine and marijuana. The defendants were convicted in Rock Springs.

Source: *Associated Press*, 13 March 2001.

Violence

Methamphetamine-related violence is a concern to law enforcement and public health officials. Methamphetamine is a powerful stimulant that affects the central nervous system and can induce anxiety, insomnia, paranoia, hallucinations, mood swings, delusions, and violent behavior, particularly during the "tweaking" stage of abuse. (See text box.) Abusers of methamphetamine frequently commit crimes and violent acts to obtain money to support their drug habits. Distributors often use violence in the course of conducting business and defending their territory. Such violence poses a direct threat to law enforcement officers.

Methamphetamine producers and abusers have been linked to violent crimes in Wyoming, including an alarming number of domestic crimes ranging from child neglect to homicide. The paranoia that accompanies methamphetamine abuse has caused many users to assault and even kill family members, including children. Methamphetamine production in Wyoming poses a direct threat to the safety of children. Methamphetamine laboratories in homes typically result in deplorable conditions and are unsafe for the families living there because of caustic and flammable chemicals used in methamphetamine production. Children were found at two methamphetamine laboratory sites in 2000. Five of the methamphetamine laboratories seized during 1999 and 2000 were located within 500 feet of elementary schools.

The presence of methamphetamine laboratories in Wyoming poses a significant risk to law enforcement officers. Law enforcement authorities discovered booby traps, blasting caps, black powder, and hand grenades during four laboratory seizures in 1999. In 2000 law enforcement personnel seized a methamphetamine laboratory and discovered books and literature on bomb making, along with chemicals used to manufacture bombs.

Tweaking

During the tweaking stage, a methamphetamine user often has not slept for days and, consequently, is extremely irritable. The tweaker also craves more methamphetamine, which results in frustration and contributes to anxiety and restlessness. In this stage the tweaker does not need a confrontation or provocation to become violent. Case histories indicate that tweakers have reacted violently at the mere sight of a police uniform.

Man Sentenced After Assault, Methamphetamine Possession Convictions

In March 2000 a Cheyenne man was sentenced to 17 years in prison after being convicted of aggravated assault and possession of methamphetamine. While in his truck the man chased a woman in her car for 15 miles before firing three bullets at her and running her off the road. The woman was a stranger to him. A personal-use quantity of methamphetamine was discovered in his possession at the time of his arrest.

Source: *Associated Press*, 18 March 2000.

Production

While most of the methamphetamine available in Wyoming is produced in Mexico and, to a somewhat lesser extent, in California—particularly in the San Francisco Bay Area or California's Central Valley—some methamphetamine production takes place in Wyoming. Methamphetamine production in Wyoming has increased because of high demand for the drug. Most of the methamphetamine laboratories seized in Wyoming are small, hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method operations capable of producing multiounce to pound quantities. In 2000 law enforcement agencies seized a total of 19 methamphetamine laboratories from 9 of Wyoming's 23 counties, primarily in the southeastern corner of the state. By August 2001 each of the six regional enforcement teams had seized at least one laboratory.

The presence of methamphetamine laboratories poses hazards to the local population, law enforcement officers, and other emergency response personnel. These laboratories contain highly flammable toxic chemicals and vapors. Methamphetamine laboratories produce 5 to 7 pounds of toxic waste for every pound of methamphetamine produced. Toxic residue from methamphetamine production is dumped in the local area, contaminating groundwater and soil. Remediation of these laboratory sites costs federal, state, and local governments millions of dollars every year. The average cost of cleaning one site is $5,000; however, costs can exceed $100,000 for larger sites.

The Birch reduction (Nazi) method of methamphetamine production also is used in Wyoming. Anhydrous ammonia, an agricultural fertilizer, was present in four of the methamphetamine laboratories seized in 1999 and in two seized in 2000, indicating the use of the Birch reduction method. The Rocky Mountain HIDTA reports that the Birch reduction method is one of the most common methods used in the Rocky Mountain region. Small quantities of methamphetamine—usually a pound or less—with purity levels of about 90 percent are produced in less than an hour using the Birch reduction method.

Birch reduction method production laboratories are small, highly mobile means of producing methamphetamine. The necessary chemicals and equipment can fit into a box, and a laboratory can be assembled almost anywhere. Common locations include the trunks of cars, the beds of trucks, residences, and motel rooms. These laboratories also can be set up and operated outdoors, making detection difficult in this rural, sparsely populated state.

Investigation Results in Arrests, Laboratory Seizure

A 1999 investigation in Evanston resulted in the arrest of four individuals and the seizure of a methamphetamine laboratory in Green River. The individuals were suspected of producing and distributing 10 to 15 pounds of methamphetamine monthly in both Evanston and Salt Lake City, Utah. One of those arrested was wanted for methamphetamine production in Salt Lake City.

Source: 2000 Rocky Mountain HIDTA Threat Assessment Report.

Methamphetamine Production

Ephedrine/Pseudoephedrine Reduction Methods

Hydriodic acid/red phosphorus: The principal chemicals associated with this method are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, hydriodic acid, and red phosphorus. This method can yield multipound quantities of high-quality d-methamphetamine and is often associated with Mexican drug trafficking organizations.

Birch reduction: The principal chemicals associated with this method (also known as Nazi) are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, anhydrous ammonia, and sodium or lithium metal. This method yields ounce quantities of high-quality d-methamphetamine and is often used by independent dealers and producers.

Iodine/red phosphorus: The principal chemicals associated with this method are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, iodine (combined with water to produce hydriodic acid), and red phosphorus. This method is also called the cold cook method because the chemicals are often placed in a hot environment (e.g., in the sun) instead of being heated over a flame. This method yields ounce quantities of high-quality d-methamphetamine.

Phenyl-2-Propanone (P2P) Method

P2P: The principal chemicals associated with this method are phenyl-2-propanone, aluminum, methylamine, and mercuric acid. This method yields low-quality dl-methamphetamine and is traditionally associated with outlaw motorcycle gangs.

Transportation

Wyoming is both a destination and a transit area for methamphetamine. The primary method for methamphetamine transportation into and through Wyoming is by private vehicle using the interstate highway system. According to DEA and the Wyoming DCI, methamphetamine is transported to Wyoming from distribution centers in Denver, Colorado; Phoenix, Arizona; Salt Lake City, Utah; San Francisco, California; and Spokane, Washington. The DCI's Regional Enforcement Teams reported the seizure of methamphetamine from all of these distribution centers during 1999 and 2000. The primary methamphetamine transportation routes include I-25 from New Mexico via Colorado to northern Wyoming and I-80 from California to southern Wyoming. Mexican criminal groups are the primary transporters of wholesale quantities of methamphetamine to Wyoming. The DEA Cheyenne Resident Office reported in early 2001 that Mexican criminal groups were beginning to use commercial buses and private aircraft to transport methamphetamine into Wyoming.

While most of the methamphetamine available in Wyoming is produced in Mexico, some is produced in California. Mexican criminal groups transport methamphetamine produced in the San Francisco Bay area, in California's Central Valley, or in Southern California, to Wyoming. In 2000

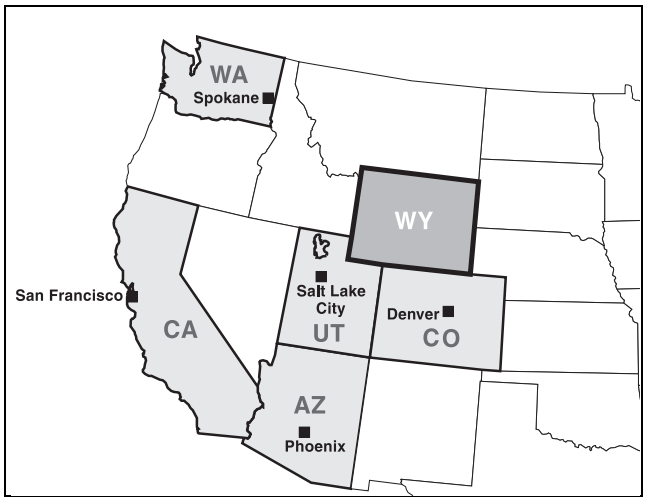

Figure 2. Distribution centers for methamphetamine in Wyoming.

investigators with the Regional Enforcement Team in Casper identified a superlab—capable of producing up to 10 pounds of methamphetamine per cook—in San Bernardino, California, as a methamphetamine supply source for criminal groups in Wyoming. California law enforcement authorities subsequently seized the laboratory.

Wyoming is also a transit area for methamphetamine transported from California to destinations in the Midwest. In August 2001 Uinta County deputy sheriffs seized 20 pounds of methamphetamine destined for Minneapolis, Minnesota, on I-80 near Lyman, Wyoming. The methamphetamine was hidden behind a panel in the rear of a sport utility vehicle with California license plates. Two California residents and three Mexican illegal aliens were arrested.

Methamphetamine is transported to Wyoming using mail and parcel delivery services. Postal inspectors use drug detection dogs and electronic equipment to seize drug shipments transported via the mail service. Controlled deliveries of packaged drugs occasionally result in methamphetamine-related arrests.

Methamphetamine produced in Wyoming is transported occasionally to other states for distribution and consumption. In May 2000 law enforcement personnel from the Rio Blanco, Colorado, Sheriff's Office stopped a car accompanied by two motorcycles near the Colorado-Utah border. A consensual search of the car resulted in the seizure of approximately 122 grams of methamphetamine and 150 grams of marijuana. The methamphetamine, purchased in southwestern Wyoming, had been transported through northeastern Utah into Colorado. A subsequent execution of search warrants at two residences in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, resulted in the discovery of a methamphetamine laboratory. Authorities also found receipts for the purchase of chemicals and equipment.

Highway Patrol Seizes Methamphetamine, Currency

In August 1999 the Wyoming Highway Patrol seized approximately 3 kilograms of methamphetamine and $10,200 in U.S. currency from two female U.S. citizens traveling east on I-80 in Laramie County near Cheyenne. The women were en route to Texas in a privately owned vehicle bearing Texas license plates. Upon searching the vehicle officers discovered the methamphetamine in a hidden compartment in the driver's side wheel well.

Source: EPIC Highway Drug Interdiction Weekly Activity Report.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups dominate wholesale methamphetamine distribution in Wyoming. DEA and state law enforcement agencies note that Mexican criminal groups usually control methamphetamine distribution, especially multiounce and larger quantities. Law enforcement authorities note that when one of these Mexican criminal groups is dismantled, another quickly replaces it. DEA reports that a Mexican criminal group operating from Casper since 1989 has nearly total control of wholesale methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana distribution in central and northern Wyoming. This group also reportedly supplies methamphetamine and cocaine to distributors in Nebraska.

The Wyoming DCI indicates that Mexican criminal groups based in other states supply multiounce and pound quantities of methamphetamine to local independent dealers. Local independent dealers dominate retail distribution of methamphetamine in Wyoming. Retail sales often occur in private residences. These sales involve gram or eighth- or quarter-ounce quantities. Methamphetamine also is sold at the retail level in hotels and on street corners. Methamphetamine sold at the retail level is most frequently packaged in plastic bags.

Mexican Criminal Group Investigated; 10 Charged

Beginning in 1998 federal, state, and local law enforcement in Wyoming and Utah investigated a Mexican criminal group. The group was responsible for distributing approximately 55 pounds of methamphetamine in southwestern Wyoming between 1996 and 1998. The group had direct links to sources of supply in Mexico. This investigation resulted in federal charges against 10 individuals for drug- and immigration-related offenses. Four of the individuals arrested were Mexican nationals.

Source: Wyoming Department of Criminal Investigation.

Marijuana

Marijuana is the second greatest drug threat and the most widely available and abused illicit drug in Wyoming. Law enforcement agencies seize more marijuana than any other drug. Most of the marijuana available in Wyoming is produced in Mexico. Mexican criminal groups transport and distribute marijuana at the wholesale and retail levels throughout the state. Cannabis also is grown indoors in Wyoming. Local independent dealers distribute locally produced marijuana.

Abuse

Marijuana abuse in Wyoming is increasing. Statistics from the Wyoming Department of Health, Division of Substance Abuse, indicate a steady increase in marijuana treatment admissions from 1997 through 1999. Marijuana-related admissions numbered 545 in 1997, increased to 667 admissions in 1998, and rose to 690 admissions in 1999—an overall increase of 26 percent during this 3-year period. TEDS data also reflect an increase in 1998, from 582 admissions in 1997 to 726 admissions in 1998, before showing a decrease to 691 admissions in 1999. Disparities between state and federal reporting on admissions to substance abuse treatment programs are likely to occur because of differences in data collection and reporting methodologies. In 1999 marijuana was a factor in eight deaths in Casper, according to DAWN ME data. The Wyoming Department of Health reported that the typical marijuana abuser in treatment in 1999 was a Caucasian male 21 to 30 years of age. TEDS data indicate that 68 percent of admissions for marijuana abuse in Wyoming in 1999 were under 25 years of age.

Marijuana abuse among students is lower in Wyoming than the national average. The 1999 YRBS indicates that over 42 percent of Wyoming high school students surveyed reported using marijuana at least once in their lifetime. This was less than the national average of 47 percent. Approximately 21 percent of student respondents reported marijuana use within the past 30 days, compared with 27 percent nationally. Almost 11 percent of students surveyed in Wyoming had used marijuana before the age of 13—on par with the national average.

Availability

Marijuana is the most widely available illegal drug in Wyoming. While the number of marijuana-related arrests has declined because of increased enforcement efforts directed at methamphetamine, marijuana is consistently seized in greater amounts than any other drug. Mexico-produced marijuana is the most common type available; however, marijuana cultivated in the United States by Mexican criminal groups and locally produced marijuana also are available. In 2001 the Wyoming DCI reported that most of the cannabis seized from indoor grow operations was sinsemilla.

Marijuana is readily available throughout Wyoming. Law enforcement agencies seized more marijuana than all other illegal substances during each year from 1994 through 2000. The Wyoming DCI reported that its six Regional Enforcement Teams seized over 270 kilograms of marijuana and made 267 marijuana-related arrests in 2000. DEA reported that 8 percent of its arrests in Wyoming in FY1999 were for marijuana-related offenses.

Prices for Mexican marijuana have remained stable since the mid-1990s. Ounce prices range from $125 to $150, and pound prices are approximately $1,200. Mexican sinsemilla is uncommon, but locally cultivated sinsemilla can be purchased for $250 per ounce and approximately $3,500 per pound. According to the University of Mississippi Marijuana Potency Monitoring Program, the average THC level for marijuana seized in Wyoming in 2000 was 7.3 percent.

Sinsemilla

Sinsemilla, in Spanish, means without seed. Growing the female cannabis plant separate from the male cannabis plant prevents pollination, resulting in an increase in THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) levels and bud growth. DEA reports that the average THC content of sinsemilla grown indoors ranges from 8 to 10 percent. The average marijuana yield for mature sinsemilla is approximately one-half pound per plant, compared with 1 pound per plant for commercial-grade marijuana.

Violence

There are no reported occurrences of violence associated with marijuana distribution and abuse in Wyoming. However, in the United States cultivators often employ armed guards to protect indoor and outdoor grow sites. Distributors commit violent acts to protect their territory.

Production

While most marijuana available in Wyoming is produced in Mexico, cannabis is cultivated in Wyoming. High altitudes, a short growing season, and effective eradication efforts by law enforcement authorities limit outdoor cannabis cultivation in Wyoming. Most cannabis cultivation in Wyoming takes place indoors. These grow operations are easier to conceal from law enforcement authorities and yield harvests year-round. Typically, indoor marijuana grows are small and are located in private residences. The marijuana from these indoor grows is usually for local distribution or personal use.

Wyoming authorities maintain an active marijuana eradication program. DEA supports various state and local agencies in Wyoming that

participate in the Domestic Cannabis Eradication and Suppression Program (DCE/SP). In 1998 DCE/SP seized 804 cannabis plants from indoor grows, 7 pounds of processed marijuana, and made 5 marijuana-related arrests in Wyoming. In 1999 law enforcement agencies seized 69 cannabis plants, over 87 pounds of processed marijuana, and made 4 marijuana-related arrests involving indoor grows pursuant to the DCE/SP. In 2000 authorities seized 115 cannabis plants, 483 pounds of processed marijuana, and made 4 marijuana-related arrests involving indoor grows under the DCE/SP.

Transportation

Most marijuana consumed in Wyoming is transported from Mexico. Mexican criminal groups transport large quantities of marijuana from the Southwest Border states to Wyoming. Marijuana commonly is transshipped through

Figure 3. Distribution centers for marijuana in Wyoming.

Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah. Denver is a significant transshipment area for marijuana destined for Wyoming—both Mexico-produced marijuana and marijuana produced in California by Mexican criminal groups. Mexican criminal groups based in Denver transport wholesale quantities of marijuana to Wyoming and distribute it locally.

Private vehicles, commercial trucks, and buses are used to transport marijuana into the state, primarily via interstate highways. Interstate 80 is the primary transportation route used by criminal groups to transport marijuana to and through Wyoming. Interstate 25 frequently is used. While criminal groups have used I-90 to transport marijuana, there were no seizures of marijuana along this interstate in 2000. Marijuana often is concealed inside duffel bags stowed in vehicle trunks and cargo areas. The use of hidden compartments in vehicles is not a common method of concealing marijuana.

Marijuana Seized

In late 1999 the southeastern Regional Enforcement Team arrested three individuals from Texas and seized 64 pounds of marijuana from the vehicle they were operating. The group allegedly supplied multipound quantities of marijuana to distributors in Cheyenne and Wheatland.

Source: Rocky Mountain HIDTA 2000 Threat Assessment Report.

Criminal groups transporting marijuana to other states frequently transit Wyoming via the state's interstate highways. In 2000 investigators with the Midwest HIDTA uncovered a criminal group transporting up to 374 pounds of marijuana per month through Wyoming via I-80. A 1999 seizure related to this investigation yielded 317 pounds of marijuana.

The Wyoming Highway Patrol participates in Operation Pipeline, a national highway interdiction program supported by the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). Operation Pipeline operates along the highways and interstates most commonly used to transport illegal drugs and drug proceeds.

According to Operation Pipeline statistics in 2000, 495 pounds of marijuana were seized during four traffic stops. All of the marijuana shipments originated in and were destined for states other than Wyoming.

Marijuana Seized; Man Sentenced for Possession

In April 2000 the Wyoming Highway Patrol seized approximately 320 pounds of marijuana from a car traveling east on I-80 in Laramie County, Wyoming. The driver, a resident of Melrose Park, Illinois, was en route to Chicago, Illinois, from San Diego, California, in a rented automobile. The marijuana was discovered in the trunk of the vehicle during a consensual search. On February 15, 2001, the man was sentenced to 4 to 9 years in prison for possession with intent to deliver marijuana.

Source: Operation Pipeline.

Distribution

Wholesale and retail marijuana distribution occurs in Wyoming. Mexican criminal groups dominate marijuana distribution at the wholesale level. These groups also are the primary retail distributors of marijuana. Caucasian independent dealers distribute locally produced marijuana.

Marijuana typically is sold from private residences and bars. This retail distribution method poses significantly more challenges to law enforcement authorities than the open-air marijuana markets used in other areas of the United States.

Cocaine

Cocaine remains a threat to Wyoming, although not to the same extent as methamphetamine or marijuana. Powdered cocaine and crack cocaine are seized in the state, but not in significant quantities. Law enforcement agencies throughout Wyoming report that Mexican criminal groups control the wholesale distribution of powdered cocaine and the retail distribution of powdered and crack cocaine in Wyoming.

Abuse

Treatment admissions for cocaine abuse increased between 1997 and 1998, then decreased in 1999. The Wyoming Department of Health, Division of Substance Abuse, reported 61 cocaine treatment admissions in 1997, 92 in 1998, and 71 in 1999. TEDS data also indicate a decrease in admissions for cocaine abuse in 1999. There were 64 admissions for cocaine abuse in 1997, 97 admissions in 1998, and 70 admissions in 1999. Disparities between state and federal reporting on admissions to substance abuse treatment programs are likely to occur because of differences in data collection and reporting methodologies. According to both data sets, the typical cocaine abuser in treatment during 1999 was a Caucasian male between 31 and 50 years of age.

Crack cocaine abuse in Wyoming is not widespread. A review of TEDS information indicates that of the 70 cocaine treatment admissions

reported in 1999, 23 were for smoked cocaine abuse. There were 27 admissions to public treatment for smoked cocaine abuse in Wyoming in both 1997 and 1998. Nearly 74 percent of patients admitted for smoked cocaine abuse in 1999 were male, and 95 percent were Caucasian. More than one-third of those admitted to treatment for smoked cocaine abuse in 1999 were between the ages of 21 and 25, while nearly another one-third were between 31 and 35 years of age.

Trends in cocaine abuse among Wyoming youth are mixed. According to the 1999 YRBS, 9.8 percent of Wyoming respondents reported using some form of cocaine at least once in their lifetime, higher than the national average of 9.5 percent. However, 3.7 percent of Wyoming respondents reported current cocaine use, compared with 4 percent nationally. This represents a decline from 1995, when the YRBS indicates that 4.7 percent of Wyoming respondents reported current cocaine use. In 1999 abuse levels in both categories were higher for males than for females.

Cocaine is linked to few drug-related deaths in Wyoming. According to DAWN ME data, there have been only two cocaine-related deaths in Casper since 1996. The most recent death occurred in 1999.

Availability

Cocaine is available throughout Wyoming, particularly in the urban areas of Casper and Cheyenne, but to a lesser degree than methamphetamine. DEA notes that cocaine is being replaced by methamphetamine as the stimulant of choice. During 2000 Wyoming DCI seized approximately 3.5 kilograms of powdered cocaine, more than 80 grams of crack cocaine, and arrested 51 individuals on cocaine-related charges. From 1998 through 2000 the Wyoming DCI conducted 110 cocaine-related investigations; almost all occurred in urban areas.

Cocaine prices have remained stable since 1998. A kilogram—when available—can cost from $21,000 to $23,000. An ounce of powdered cocaine sells for $1,000 to $1,200, one-eighth of an ounce for $200 to $275, and a gram of powdered cocaine sells for approximately $100, according to DEA. Crack cocaine, which sells for $50 to $100 per gram and $25 to $40 per rock, is available on a limited basis in Cheyenne and Casper. Purity levels for powdered and crack cocaine were not available.

Violence

There are few reported occurrences of violence associated with cocaine distribution and abuse in Wyoming. While wholesale and retail cocaine distributors in other parts of the country often are noted for committing violent acts in order to protect their territory, Wyoming appears to be an exception. However, cocaine abusers do occasionally commit violent acts such as assaults, homicides, and rapes.

Man Receives Six Life Sentences for Assaulting Girl

In December 2000 a Laramie County man was sentenced to six consecutive life sentences for repeatedly raping his girlfriend's 8-year-old daughter. According to testimony, the man would shoot up or snort cocaine and engage in abusive sex with the girl. The convicted man also faces charges in Mississippi of murdering the girl's mother, whose body is still missing.

Source: *Associated Press*, 2 December 2000.

Production

There is no coca cultivated or cocaine produced in Wyoming. Within the state, some Mexican criminal groups convert powdered cocaine to crack for retail distribution while individual abusers convert powdered cocaine to crack for personal use, usually at or near the point of distribution or consumption.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups control transportation of powdered cocaine in Wyoming. Law enforcement agencies indicate that cocaine typically is transported to Wyoming from distribution centers such as Denver and Greeley, Colorado; Los Angeles, California; Salt Lake City, Utah; and Seattle, Washington. In 2000 DEA indicated that cocaine available in western Wyoming generally was transported from Salt Lake City, while cocaine available in the eastern part of the state generally was transported from Denver.

Various means are used to transport cocaine to Wyoming. Interstate 25 from the Southwest, I-80 from California, and I-90 from Washington are the most frequently used cocaine transportation routes. Commercial buses and private vehicles are the most common methods of transporting cocaine. Hidden compartments in private vehicles were once the usual means of concealing powdered cocaine. However, Wyoming DCI reports that in recent years criminal groups have favored transporting cocaine in luggage in the trunks of vehicles. Package delivery services and commercial aircraft also are used to transport cocaine to Wyoming.

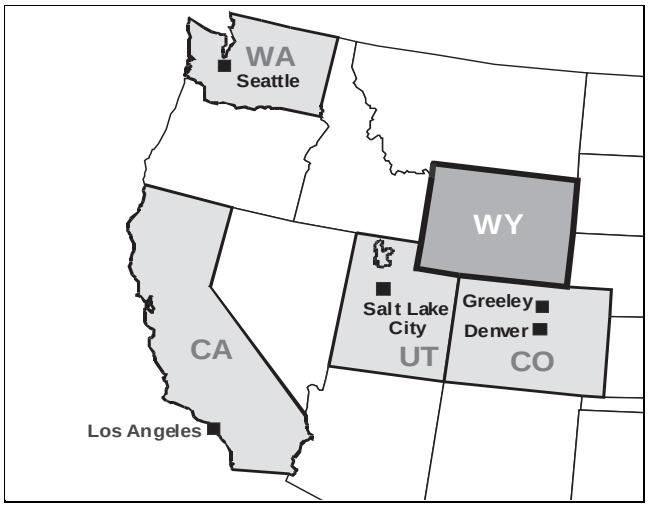

Figure 4. Distribution centers for cocaine in Wyoming.

Drugs Worth $250,000 Recovered from Bus

In January 2001 drugs valued at more than $250,000 were recovered from a suitcase aboard a commercial bus. Cheyenne Police Department detectives seized 2 kilograms of cocaine and 28 pounds of marijuana from a suitcase in the luggage compartment of the bus. A police department canine alerted on the drugs during a routine check. The bus was heading east from Sacramento, California, to Waterloo, Iowa.

Source: *Wyoming Tribune Eagle,* 30 January 2001.

Mexican criminal groups transport powdered cocaine destined for other states through Wyoming. Operation Pipeline 2000 data indicate that there were two seizures of cocaine in Wyoming yielding almost 3.2 kilograms of the drug. These shipments were destined for other states. There were no seizures of cocaine reported to EPIC in 1999.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups are the primary wholesale and retail distributors of powdered cocaine in Wyoming and are the primary retailers of crack cocaine. Wholesale distributors typically sell powdered cocaine in pound quantities. At the retail level, powdered cocaine and crack cocaine are sold from private residences and local bars rather than open-air drug markets. Retail distributors typically sell powdered cocaine in 1-ounce or smaller quantities, and crack cocaine is sold by the rock or by the gram. While Mexican criminal groups control most retail powdered cocaine distribution, retail distribution by Caucasian independent dealers increased in 1999.

Cocaine Investigation

In November 1999 two Laramie County women sold cocaine to a confidential informant at the residence where the women lived. Agents found a total of 28.8 grams of cocaine on scales in several parts of the house. On February 1, 2001, the primary defendant was sentenced to 3 to 5 years in prison for one count of possession with intent to deliver cocaine and one count of delivery of cocaine.

Source: *Wyoming Tribune Eagle,* 2 February 2001.

Investigations Expose Criminal Group

In Torrington, Wyoming, during 1999 a joint investigation by federal, state, and local agencies resulted in the arrest of two individuals and the seizure of 1 pound of powdered cocaine. A subsequent investigation revealed that a Greeley, Colorado, criminal group that supplied the cocaine was responsible for distributing 5 pounds of cocaine and multi-pound quantities of marijuana in Torrington, Wyoming, and Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

Source: Rocky Mountain HIDTA 2000 Threat Assessment.

Heroin

Heroin is not a significant threat to Wyoming. Public treatment statistics and arrest data suggest a small user population. The type of heroin available is almost exclusively Mexican black tar, according to law enforcement officials. Criminal groups in Wyoming do not normally distribute heroin. Abusers typically travel to large cities in neighboring states such as Colorado to purchase personal use quantities, then return to Wyoming to sell small quantities of the drug to support their own habits. While the primary distribution center for heroin available in Wyoming is Denver, Colorado, law enforcement authorities note that Salt Lake City, Utah, also is a distribution center for the drug.

Abuse

Heroin abuse is not widespread in Wyoming. Public treatment admission data indicate that the number of individuals seeking treatment for heroin abuse is low. According to the Wyoming Department of Health, Substance Abuse Division, heroin treatment admissions rose from 14 in 1997 to 19 in 1998 and declined to 18 in 1999. TEDS data also reflect a low incidence of heroin treatment in Wyoming. Admissions to public treatment for heroin abuse numbered 16 in 1997, 19 in 1998, and 17 in 1999. Disparities between state and federal reporting on admissions to substance abuse treatment programs are likely to occur because of differences in data collection and reporting methodologies. Nearly 75 percent of patients admitted to treatment for heroin abuse in 1999 were over 36 years of age; almost 53 percent were female and 73 percent were Caucasian, according to TEDS. In 1999

DAWN data indicated one heroin-related death in Casper, the first such death since 1997. According to the 1999 YRBS, heroin abuse among Wyoming's high school students is slightly higher than the national average, with 2.9 percent of respondents reporting lifetime heroin use compared with 2.4 percent nationally.

Availability

Heroin availability in Wyoming is low due to limited demand for the drug. Heroin abusers in Wyoming typically purchase the drug in small quantities in northern Colorado or Utah, usually in the Denver and Salt Lake City areas. In Wyoming, abusers frequently purchase slightly more than they need for personal use, then sell the rest to support their habit. Law enforcement sources report that the heroin available in the state is almost exclusively Mexican black tar. The price range for Mexican black tar heroin in Wyoming is $125 to $250 per gram. Personal use quantities can be purchased at the retail level for $20 to $50. Retail-level purity in Wyoming averages 23 percent, according to DEA.

Violence

There are few reported occurrences of violence associated with heroin distribution and abuse in Wyoming. Heroin abusers are generally nonviolent, but some commit burglary or robbery to support their addiction.

Production

Opium is not cultivated nor is heroin produced in Wyoming.

Transportation

Abusers in Wyoming typically travel to large cities in neighboring states to purchase personal use quantities of Mexican black tar heroin. (See Figure 5 on page 18.) Heroin abusers traveling to Denver, Colorado, to purchase personal use quantities of the drug typically travel I-25, the main route connecting northern Colorado and Wyoming.

Abusers traveling to Salt Lake City, Utah, to purchase heroin typically use I-80, which connects northern Utah and southern Wyoming. No heroin seizures were reported to Operation Pipeline in 1999 or 2000; however, occasionally law enforcement seizes heroin during routine traffic

Highway Stop Uncovers Heroin

In June 2000 State Highway Patrol officers stopped a vehicle bearing Minnesota license plates on I-80 near Rock Springs, Wyoming. The search of a passenger revealed approximately 126 grams of heroin concealed on his body. A search of the vehicle yielded more than 2 pounds of methamphetamine. The driver and passenger, both residents of Fresno, California, were traveling to Columbia Heights, Minnesota, near Minneapolis.

Source: 2001 Rocky Mountain HIDTA Threat Assessment.

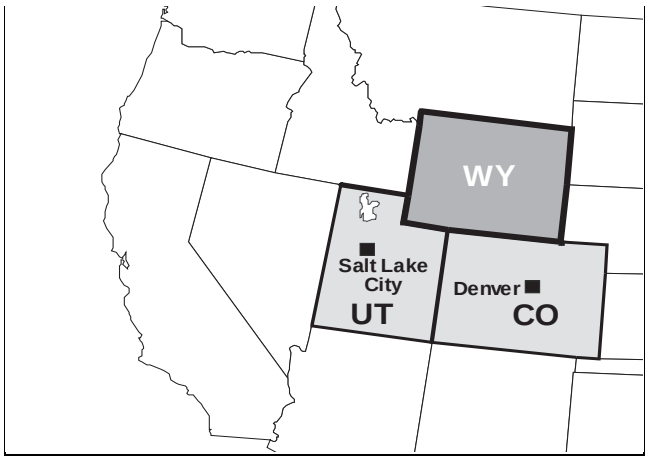

Figure 5. Distribution centers for heroin in Wyoming.

stops. According to the Rocky Mountain HIDTA, nearly all seizures of heroin (130 grams) in Wyoming in 2000 were the result of interdiction efforts. Typically, the heroin being transported through Wyoming was en route to other states. Abusers use package delivery services as another method to obtain heroin from Denver.

Distribution

There are no indications of organized wholesale or retail heroin distribution in Wyoming. The limited amount of heroin that is available in the state usually is sold by abusers who make purchases in adjoining states and sell small amounts to support their habit.

Other Dangerous Drugs

The other dangerous drugs (ODDs) category includes club drugs (stimulants, sedatives, and hallucinogens), psilocybin, inhalants, and diverted pharmaceuticals. Currently, the ODD threat in Wyoming is minimal. Club drugs seized or purchased by law enforcement personnel in Wyoming include LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate), and MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine). Increases in the availability and use of club drugs such as GHB and MDMA have been noted by the Wyoming DCI; however, the user population remains very limited. Typically, club drugs are used by teens and young adults at all-night dance parties called raves. Nearly 150 tablets of MDMA were seized in 2000, primarily in Albany and Laramie Counties in southeastern Wyoming. The use of psilocybin, inhalants, and some diverted pharmaceuticals is also of concern to law enforcement authorities. Inhalant abuse by Wyoming youth is higher than the national average.

Raves

Throughout the 1990s, high energy, all-night dances known as raves, which feature hard-pounding techno-music and flashing laser lights, increased in popularity among teens and young adults. Raves occur in most metropolitan areas of the country. They can be either permanent dance clubs or temporary “weekend event” sites set up in abandoned warehouses, open fields, empty buildings, or civic centers. Club drugs are a group of synthetic drugs often sold at raves and dance clubs. MDMA is one of the most popular club drugs. Rave managers often sell water, pacifiers, and glow sticks at rave parties. “Ravers” require water to offset dehydration caused by MDMA, use pacifiers to prevent the grinding of teeth—a common side effect of MDMA use—and wave glow sticks in front of their eyes because MDMA stimulates light perception.

Law Enforcement Targets Rave at Ranch

In June 2001, 123 law enforcement personnel from the Laramie County Sheriff's Office, the Wyoming DCI, and other agencies participated in a joint enforcement operation centered on a rave at a ranch south of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Between 3,000 and 4,000 people attended the event. Officials stopped and examined 366 vehicles and seized thousands of doses of MDMA, LSD, psilocybin, marijuana, cocaine, morphine, and ketamine. Drug charges were filed against 80 individuals; 6 individuals were charged with felony drug possession. According to the DCI, about 95 percent of the vehicles stopped had Colorado plates.

Source: *Casper Star-Tribune,* 27 June 2001.

LSD

Of the limited threat posed by ODDs to Wyoming, LSD is considered the most significant. According to the Wyoming Attorney General's Office, LSD is more prevalent in the state than MDMA, GHB, or heroin. LSD is transported to Wyoming in private vehicles from Denver, Colorado, and the West Coast. The San Francisco, California, area is the primary source of LSD for the Rocky Mountain region. The price of the drug ranges from $1 to $5 per dosage unit at the retail level.

In Wyoming hallucinogen abuse, the most common of which is LSD, is a greater concern than heroin abuse. Statistics from the Wyoming Department of Health, Division of Substance Abuse, indicate that there were 9 admissions to public treatment for hallucinogen abuse in 1997, 15 admissions in 1998, and 6 admissions in 1999. TEDS data indicate the same trend, with 8 admissions for hallucinogen abuse in 1997, 16 admissions in 1998, and 6 admissions in 1999.

Seizure and arrest data suggest that LSD is available in sufficient quantity to satisfy user demand in the state. In 1998 DCI reported the largest amount of LSD seized in Wyoming since 1996—3,102 dosage units—in connection with a series of enforcement operations against LSD distributors. These operations at least temporarily diminished the availability of LSD. In 1999 a total of 155 dosage units were seized, and in 2000 law enforcement agencies seized 320 dosage units, primarily as the result of enforcement operations. The Wyoming DCI arrested eight individuals in 1999 for violations involving hallucinogens and six in 2000.

GHB

GHB, also known as liquid ecstasy, scoop, grievous bodily harm, and Georgia home boy, is abused for its euphoric, sedative, and anabolic effects; however, its use can induce coma and cause insomnia, anxiety, tremors, and sweating. GHB combined with methamphetamine increases the risk of seizures. Overdoses can occur quickly; some of the effects include drowsiness, nausea, vomiting, loss of consciousness, impaired breathing, and death. GHB is eliminated from the body quickly and may be difficult to detect in emergency rooms and other treatment facilities. The drug increasingly is implicated in poisonings, overdoses, sexual assaults, and fatalities. GHB can be produced from easily obtained ingredients, one of which is GBL (gamma-butyrolactone), a solvent commonly sold as a paint stripper.

GBL is a List I chemical used in the manufacture of GHB and, when taken orally, is metabolized into GHB in the body. On January 21, 1999, the

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a warning concerning food supplement products containing GBL. The FDA requested that producers recall all products containing the additive. According to a January 2000 report, GBL was implicated in at least six deaths nationwide. GBL is sold commonly in powder or liquid forms at some gyms, fitness centers, and health food stores. The process for manufacturing GHB involves mixing GBL with either sodium or potassium hydroxide. The final GHB product varies depending on whether water or alcohol is used as a solvent in the process. When water is used, the final product is a colorless, viscous, clear solution. When alcohol is used, the final product is a white solid.

GHB is not considered a major ODD threat to Wyoming. However, a large GHB laboratory was seized in March 2000 from a storage locker facility in Laramie County. Two 55-gallon drums filled with GHB precursor chemicals—dihydrofuranone, potassium hydroxide, and sodium hydroxide—were found in the storage locker. With the amounts of potassium and sodium hydroxide seized, the laboratory was capable of producing up to 69 kilograms of GHB; with some additional chemicals, the laboratory could have produced 120 kilograms or more than 2.5 million tablets. Four cases containing a total of 24,000 GHB tablets also were seized; each case contained 12 bottles filled with 500 tablets each. The production capacity of this laboratory indicates that GHB was intended for broad distribution outside the state. The investigation of the organization operating this laboratory has generated links to 12 other states and one foreign country.

MDMA

MDMA is taken orally in tablet or capsule form. The user begins to feel the effects within 1 hour of ingestion. Effects may last up to 6 hours, depending on dosage, purity, and the environment in which it is taken. Some users take multiple doses to extend the effect, sometimes consuming as many as 10 tablets in a single night.

The physical and psychological effects of MDMA use vary widely. MDMA use greatly increases blood pressure and heart rate and can result in heart failure or heat stroke. Body temperature can increase to 109 degrees during physical exertion. Obvious physical effects include muscle tension, involuntary teeth clenching, nausea, blurred vision, rapid eye movement, faintness, chills or sweating, extreme relaxation, and tremors. MDMA is a mood/mind-altering drug affecting brain serotonin levels. Common psychological effects are feelings of emotional closeness coupled with the breakdown of personal communication barriers, a sense of peace with oneself and the world, an enhanced sense of pleasure, greater self-confidence, and an increased sense of energy. Some users may experience panic attacks.

Wyoming authorities report that the availability of MDMA is increasing. Although Wyoming does not have a significant rave culture, raves are becoming more frequent in the southeastern corner of the state. Some Wyoming MDMA users travel to rave locations in northern Colorado, such as Fort Collins and Denver, to participate in all-night events. The Rocky Mountain HIDTA and the Wyoming DCI indicate that MDMA availability has increased in the southeastern corner of the state—particularly in Laramie and Albany Counties—due to its proximity to Denver, Colorado. The Wyoming DCI reports that most of those arrested at a large June 2001 rave south of Cheyenne were residents of Colorado. The DCI conducted three investigations involving MDMA distribution in Cheyenne and Laramie between July and October of 2000. A fourth investigation during this period was conducted in the Sheridan area in northern Wyoming. MDMA in Wyoming generally sells for $13 to $28 per tablet but can be as high as $50 per tablet in remote areas of the state.

Man Gets Maximum for 139 Pounds of Ecstasy

In March 2001 an Israeli citizen residing in California was arrested along I-80 near Cheyenne after a Wyoming Highway Patrol officer found 139 pounds of MDMA in the suspect's rental car—the largest seizure of ecstasy on the nation's highways. The man was traveling from New York City to Las Vegas with almost 210,000 MDMA tablets hidden in sealed containers in luggage in the vehicle's trunk. The MDMA was valued between $1.5 million and $6 million. In September 2001 the suspect was sentenced to more than 12 years in federal prison for possession with intent to deliver.

Source: *Wyoming Tribune Eagle*, 25 September 2001.

Psilocybin

Psilocybin, also known as cubes, liberty caps, magic mushrooms, mushies, mushrooms, psilocybes, and shrooms, is the psychoactive ingredient found in certain mushrooms, notably, two Mexican species—psilocybe Mexicana and stropharia cubensis. Hallucinogenic mushrooms used in religious ceremonies by the Indians of Mexico were considered sacred and were called "God's flesh" by the Aztecs. In the 1950s the active ingredients psilocin and psilocybin were isolated from the Mexican mushrooms. They are not used in modern medicine. Psilocyn and psilocybin produce effects similar to those produced by mescaline and LSD. The chemicals take effect within 20 to 30 minutes and last about 6 hours depending on dosage.

Psilocybin is available in Wyoming in limited quantities but is not considered a significant threat. In 1999 the Rocky Mountain HIDTA reported psilocybin seizures by three agencies. In 2000 state and local agencies seized 350 grams of psilocybin, including a half-pound seizure by the Wyoming Highway Patrol in March. The average retail price of psilocybin is $200 per ounce. The Laramie Police Department reports that psilocybin is available among Laramie's college student population, particularly botany students. Those who abuse the drug transport psilocybin to Wyoming from Denver, Colorado, in private vehicles.

Inhalants

Inhalants include a broad range of chemical vapors that are inhaled, typically by youths, in hopes of achieving a short euphoric effect. Typical inhalants include solvents, household or industrial cleaners, glues, and gasoline. Use of inhalants is very risky, and a single episode can lead to brain damage, asphyxiation, and serious health problems.

Inhalant use is a problem among Wyoming youth. Lifetime inhalant use among Wyoming's high school student population is higher than the national average. According to the 1999 YRBS, approximately 18 percent of student respondents in Wyoming had used inhalants in their lifetime, compared with about 15 percent nationally. Student respondents reported current use of inhalants at a rate equal to the national average of 4.2 percent. Wyoming currently has no laws governing the sale to minors of products commonly used as inhalants. In 1999 five admissions to substance abuse treatment for inhalant abuse were reported to the Wyoming Department of Health, Division of Substance Abuse, and four admissions for inhalant abuse were reported to TEDS.

Diverted Pharmaceuticals

Few law enforcement agencies in Wyoming report a threat posed by diverted pharmaceuticals. Among the diverted pharmaceuticals most abused in Wyoming are Percodan, Percocet, and Ritalin. The most common methods of obtaining diverted pharmaceuticals in Wyoming include securing prescriptions from multiple doctors—known as doctor shopping—and prescription fraud. Several local agencies report that some parents sell their children's Ritalin prescriptions on the street. From spring through summer 2001 the Wyoming DCI investigated four diversion cases involving foreign pharmacies contacted via the Internet.

Very few law enforcement agencies report the abuse of oxycodone products in Wyoming. Nonetheless, law enforcement personnel statewide maintain a watch for OxyContin abuse. In 2001 the Wyoming DCI reported its first investigation involving OxyContin, following a controlled delivery to a Jackson woman who had ordered the drug via the Internet. The package was delivered from a Mexican pharmacy via California. The woman told authorities that she had previously received at least four other shipments of pharmaceuticals from the Mexican pharmacy without a prescription.

Outlook

Methamphetamine will continue to be the most serious drug threat to Wyoming. Domination of methamphetamine transportation and distribution by Mexican criminal groups, the ease with which it can be produced domestically, and the violence associated with methamphetamine distribution and abuse make it the primary drug threat for the foreseeable future. Methamphetamine is increasingly available, and its distributors will continue to meet user demand. Law enforcement will continue to target methamphetamine distribution by Mexican criminal groups. As a large number of abusers continue to inject the drug, the exposure to HIV, hepatitis, and other diseases transmitted through contact with infected needles will become a significant concern to law enforcement and public health officials. Law enforcement officials are concerned that this intravenous drug-using population may move toward other injectable drugs such as heroin and OxyContin, a pharmaceutical available in tablet form but which can be injected when crushed and mixed with water. Federal and state agencies can expect methamphetamine-related social and medical problems to increase throughout the state.

The production, distribution, and abuse of marijuana will continue to be eclipsed by methamphetamine; however, marijuana will remain widely available and widely abused. It will remain the drug most often seized by law enforcement. Mexico-produced marijuana will continue to be the dominant type of marijuana available in Wyoming. Marijuana produced in other states by Mexican criminal groups will also continue to be available. However, local growers will continue to cultivate cannabis indoors. While local growers are not reportedly employing violent means of protecting their crops, the possibility of such activity occurring in Wyoming remains constant.

Distribution and abuse of cocaine and heroin do not pose as serious a threat as methamphetamine to Wyoming. Cocaine abuse will likely remain stable and at low levels relative to methamphetamine abuse; demand for cocaine may decline as methamphetamine abuse increases.

Heroin abuse will remain stable at low levels. There is insufficient demand in Wyoming to support increased heroin distribution. However, law enforcement authorities are concerned that the growing intravenous methamphetamine user population in Wyoming could switch to intravenous heroin abuse. Should heroin demand increase, the Mexican criminal groups operating in Wyoming have the ability to provide ample supplies of

heroin, based on the existing drug distribution infrastructure.

ODDs are a minimal threat to Wyoming, but MDMA will be of increasing concern to law enforcement authorities. Club drug abuse may increase as MDMA becomes more available and MDMA abuse expands beyond Laramie and Albany Counties. In the absence of laws restricting the sale of chemicals, solvents, and fuels to minors, inhalants will continue to be used among Wyoming youth with more frequency than ODDs. Abuse of diverted pharmaceuticals will remain at low levels. All available indicators show that widespread abuse of oxycodone products will not likely occur soon.

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Rawlins Police Department

Rock Springs Police Department

Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

Sheridan County Sheriff's Department

Sheridan Police Department

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