



# Drug tracking plan starts

## Pharmacy purchases monitored

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Beginning today, law enforcement agencies across Louisiana will be using a new electronic tracking system to monitor the purchase of over-the-counter drugs used to make methamphetamine.

The system, called the National Precursor Log Exchange, tracks the amount of pseudoephedrine people purchase at participating pharmacies across the state and nation, said Mike Davis, chief executive officer of Appriss, a software consulting company that serves criminal justice agencies nationwide.

Pseudoephedrine, the key ingredient used to cook methamphetamine, is found in many over-the-counter cold and allergy medicines, Davis said during a news conference Monday at the Louisiana Sheriffs Association office on Nicholson Drive.

Federal and state laws limit the purchase of pseudoephedrine to 9 grams every 30 days or 3.6 grams in any 24-hour period, Davis said.

When a customer buys products containing the drug, Davis said, they must show a valid state driver's license or other valid government-issued identification and register their name and address.

The National Precursor Log Exchange stores this data and alerts pharmacists if a buyer has reached the legal limit, Davis said. Law enforcement can access the database at any time, he said.

"This is a critical tool to help crack down on the sale of drugs that are used to produce meth," Gov. Bobby Jindal said in a Louisiana State Police news release. "More importantly, the database will help keep our children safe and rid our communities of this devastating drug."

Louisiana is the second state to enter into an agreement with the National Association of Drug Diversion Investigators to use the tracking system, the news release says.

The National Association of Drug Diversion Investigators is a nonprofit organization that facilitates cooperation between law enforcement, health-care professionals, state regulatory agencies and pharmaceutical manufacturers in the prevention and investigation of prescription drug diversion.

The National Precursor Log Exchange provides law enforcement agencies across the country with free access to the multistate electronic log of cold and allergy medicine purchases, Davis said.



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Appriss CEO Mike Davis, center, talks Monday about the launch of an electronic database that will track purchases of pseudoephedrine, the key ingredient used to cook methamphetamine, in Louisiana and across the nation. At the news conference with Davis are, from left, Bobby Gaston, special program manager of the Louisiana Sheriffs Association; Hal Turner, the association's executive director; State Police Superintendent Col. Mike Edmonson and West Baton Rouge Parish Sheriff Mike Cazes.

The cost of setting up and supporting the system is covered by a private/public partnership that the National Association of Drug Diversion Investigators negotiated with the leading manufacturers of these medicines, he said.

“I am very proud to be a part of this worthwhile effort,” said state Rep. Fred Mills Jr., D-St. Martinville, who authored legislation last year regarding the limitation of drugs such as pseudoephedrine.

Mills, who is also a pharmacist, said “the pharmacy community is committed to stand shoulder to shoulder with the law enforcement community to get these dangerous drugs off our streets.”

State Police Superintendent Col. Mike Edmonson said he is looking forward to using the tracking system. “We have one of the worst problems in the country in terms of meth production,” Edmonson said. “This will be a very valuable tool to aid us in ridding our state of this terrible drug and its effects on our society.”

About 5 percent of the people who purchase cold and allergy medicine containing pseudoephedrine use it to make methamphetamine, Davis said.

Last month in Kentucky, the first state to use the tracking system, people attempted to purchase 60,000 boxes of cold and allergy medicine, Davis said. About 3,500 of those purchases were denied, he said.