



BUTTE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY



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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
October 15, 2021

Local Drug Dealer Sentenced and Warned of Future Murder Charges New Fentanyl Warnings in Court

A 49-year-old Chico drug dealer was sentenced in court yesterday to multiple years in jail and additionally warned that any continued sales of drugs could bring about a murder charge.

Shawn Charles Nowlin, 49, appeared in Butte County Superior Court Thursday where he was sentenced to six years eight months in county jail after pleading no contest to counts of Possession of Methamphetamine for Sale, Possession of Heroin for Sale, and Possession of Fentanyl for Sale.

Butte County District Attorney Mike Ramsey said Nowlin was the first local drug dealer to be given an official warning during his court sentencing that should someone die in the future from fentanyl-laced drugs supplied by him, Nowlin could be charged with murder and face life imprisonment in state prison. Ramsey noted that when Nowlin was stopped for speeding last April, a Butte County Sheriff's K9 found pounds of methamphetamine, heroin and fentanyl hidden in Nowlin's truck's tailgate. In addition, hundreds of counterfeit oxycodone pills were found and determined to be laced with fentanyl.

Ramsey said this new "Fentanyl Warning" will be given to local drug dealers upon their arraignment in Superior Court. He explained this warning states that the illicit drug supply in Butte County has become polluted with fentanyl and any drugs sold should be presumed to contain fentanyl. "With this warning and presumption, a drug dealer no longer has the excuse that they 'didn't know' their drugs contained fentanyl should a customer die from consuming their fentanyl-laced product," Ramsey said. And a murder charge could follow.

Ramsey said fentanyl has become an increasingly potent killer in Butte County. An amount as small as 2 milligrams (roughly 7 grains of salt) is enough for a fatal overdose. Ramsey stated that overdose deaths increased 34% in Butte County between 2019 and 2020. From January 2021 through April 12, 2021, there have been 11 deaths in Butte County that have been associated with fentanyl. This exceeded the total number of fentanyl related deaths that occurred in all of 2020.

"No one should assume that an apparent xanax or oxycodone pill purchased illegally on the street is safe," warned the District Attorney.

