

Informational Bulletin

New Lethal Opioid in Virginia – Protonitazene

Date: August 22, 2022

Number: 22.031

Effective Date: August 22, 2022

Expiration Date: N/A

Approved By: Darren L. Stevens, Fire Rescue Chief



The information contained in this Informational Bulletin is derived from the Virginia Fusion Center Highlight #22-13, as well as information from the Center for Disease Control.

Drug Name – Protonitazene

Drug Class – Synthetic Opioid

DEA Schedule – Schedule I (No acceptable medical use, high potential for abuse)

Background Information

In January 2022, the DEA issued a temporary scheduling of this opioid as a Schedule I substance of the Controlled Substance Act. It is identified as a white/beige colored powder, pill, or also can be found in liquid form. It is commonly mixed with other abuses substances such as fentanyl, heroin, and tramadol.

Protonitazene was identified as a substance seized by law enforcement in April 2022, and once it was identified the Virginia Fusion Center issued Highlight #22-13 on July 27, 2022. During the REMS Council meeting on August 17, 2022 it was reported that Protonitazene has been identified in our geographical service area (REMS Council). During this REMS Council meeting it was relayed that Narcan is not as effective against Protonitazene and requires higher dosing.

Side Effects

The side effects of Protonitazene are similar to other synthetic opioids. Side effects can include shallow/difficulty breathing, disorientation, constricted pupils, and cyanosis to the lips/nails. In more severe cases rapid sedation and heart failure, leading to sudden death, has been identified.

The VFC Highlight for Protonitazene is attached to this IB.

Questions regarding this bulletin should be directed to Lieutenant Jordan Coleman.



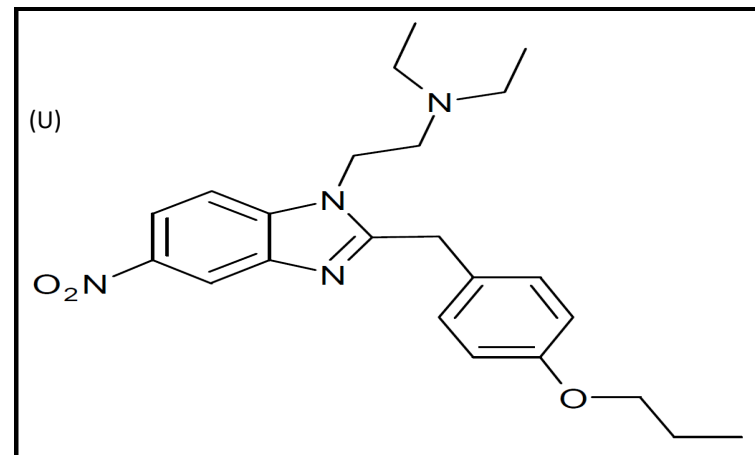
(U) Title: New Lethal Substance, Protonitazene, Identified in Virginia

(U) Key Points

- (U) Protonitazene was identified in a substance seized by law enforcement in April 2022.
- (U) Protonitazene is an opioid three times more potent than fentanyl and may be resistant to overdose reversal medications such as naloxone (Narcan).

(U) Additional Information on Protonitazene

- (U) Protonitazene is considered a Benzimidazole-Opioid (aka Nitazene) and is not approved for medical use in the US. In January 2022, the DEA issued a temporary scheduling of this opioid as a Schedule I substance of the Controlled Substances Act (CSA).
- (U) DEA identified Protonitazene as white/beige colored and could be in powder, pill, or liquid form and has also been found in syringes.
- (U) Law enforcement across the US has encountered Protonitazene as a mixture with cutting agents such as Xylazine and caffeine or other abused substances such as fentanyl, heroin, and tramadol.
- (U) Protonitazene causes effects similar to morphine depending on varying potencies. Some side effects include: shallow/difficulty breathing, disorientation, small pupils, bluish lips/nails, and discolored tongue. For some people, it may cause rapid sedation and heart failure, leading to sudden death.



(U) Please report any information pertaining to Protonitazene to the VFC at VFC@vfc.vsp.virginia.gov.