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State of Utah Department of Commerce

Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing

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MEDIA ALERT

Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing emails Pharmacy Alert statewide on fraudsters trying to fill fake opioid prescription, aids in arrest by St. George Police

"Hours after DOPL issued Pharmacy Alert, 4 suspects arrested at southern Utah pharmacy by St. George officers"
(For immediate release...)

SALT LAKE CITY, Utah – Francine A. Giani, Executive Director of the Utah Department of Commerce, announced today that an alert sent out by the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing (DOPL) to pharmacies statewide warning of possible criminal activity tied to fraudulent pain medication prescriptions helped assist law enforcement in apprehending four suspects in St. George, Utah on January 15, 2019. The Pharmacy Alert notified pharmacists that two subjects from California may attempt to fill a phony prescription for codeine laced cough syrup by using a California hospital and doctor for verification. An alert pharmacist in St. George recognized the markings of the false script from details in the DOPL Pharmacy Alert email and notified police who took four suspects into custody.

"The Utah Department of Commerce, Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing is proud of the quick response on behalf of pharmacies and police on this case," stated Francine A. Giani, "This is a great example of state agencies, pharmacies and law enforcement working together to fight crime in connection with Utah's opioid epidemic. Not only was a crime averted, but medication that could pose public harm if used in the wrong circumstances was kept from the wrong hands."

DOPL investigators send out Pharmacy Alerts based on information gleaned from the Utah Controlled Substance Database, prescribers and pharmacies. In 2018, DOPL sent out 489 pharmacy alerts for the year compared to 303 pharmacy alerts in 2017 and 220 alerts in 2016.

"DOPL is constantly looking for ways to aid licensed professionals in their role as gatekeepers for prescribing and dispensing controlled substances in Utah," remarked Mark B. Steinagel, Director of the Utah Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing. "We are grateful to the pharmacy for alerting the St. George Police whose quick response resolved a dangerous situation."

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