



Chris Waller/Index
Rider Drug employee Barbara Crabtree places a box containing packages of Sudafed on the counter Wednesday afternoon. The Sudafed is kept behind the counter, and customers must ask for it before purchasing.

Meth law makes buying meds hard

Kelly Albright
for the Index

Freshman Cindy Finney doesn't buy Sudafed in Kirksville anymore.

Finney said her allergies were bad at the start of the year, but buying Sudafed to treat them proved more of a hassle than the medicine was worth. The employees had to check her ID, and the pharmacy had to be open for her to buy it, so she decided to switch medicines instead of buying Sudafed, she said.

"I don't want to stand in line," she said. "I just want to get something from off the shelf."

Finney isn't the only one who has to go through a longer procedure to buy Sudafed. With laws limiting the amount of products containing pseudoephedrine, including Sudafed, a customer can buy, methamphetamine producers have to work harder to make their drug, but customers also must work harder to treat their allergies.

How the state law works

The state law, which was passed June 15, 2005 and went into effect July 14, 2005, regulates the sale of products containing pseudoephedrine in several ways. First, the products must be kept behind the pharmacy counter rather than the shelf, and only a licensed pharmacist or pharmacy technician can sell them.

Second, the customer must be at least 18 years old with a picture ID. Each pharmacy must keep track of purchases by logging the date, the name and address of the customer, the amount of pseudoephedrine product purchased and the name or initials of the employee who sold the product.

Third, the customer cannot buy in one sale more than six grams of the products containing pseudoephedrine or more than nine grams of the products containing pseudoephedrine in liquid or gel capsule form. In a 30-day period, the customer cannot buy more than nine grams of the products.

The law has led to an almost 21 percent decrease in Missouri from 2004 to 2005 in the number of methamphetamine incidents, which include finding laboratories, chemicals, equipment, glassware or dumpsites, according to the Missouri State Highway Patrol Web site. Many people believe, however, that more needs to be done, especially on a national level.

How pharmacies and police are using the law in Missouri

Pharmacist Mike Allen, owner of Village Pharmacy in Camden, Mo., about three hours south of Kirksville, said he thinks the law has been very effective.

"I think it's a good thing," he said. "I think it's something that needed to be done a long time ago."

Allen said his pharmacy keeps a logbook for customers who buy pseudoephedrine products to sign. The employees try to be aware of the names in the logbook but mostly leave it to the police officers who come in to make a copy of the log sheets, Allen said.

Allen said the biggest issue in regard to checking how many pseudoephedrine products each customer has bought is time, and he knows the police are checking the logs.

"We're here to follow the law," Allen said. "We're looking for abuse, but we're not looking to actually try to pinpoint everyone who comes in because that would deter customers and deter our effectiveness."

The employees would notice anything unusual going on, he said.

Hy-Vee's pharmacy keeps track of the required information a little differently. Pharmacist Brad Smith said the pharmacy keeps index cards with the customers' information, including amounts and dates they purchased pseudoephedrine products. The pharmacy employees start new cards for first-time customers and use the existing card for returning customers, he said.

Smith said he has never had to refuse a sale or report anyone for buying more than the legal limit, and customers usually don't complain about the restrictions.

"For the most part, everybody's understanding of the intent of the law and what it's trying to accomplish," Smith said.

Kirksville Police Chief Jim Hughes said he thinks the law has been a great first step in the fight against meth.

However, Hughes said the effect of the law was not as noticeable in Adair County as in other counties because the Adair County Meth Coalition had been working to reduce the meth problem since July 2003.

"What this does is help us," Hughes said. "It enhances what we're able to do, but we had already done quite a bit."

The police do not check the logs in the pharmacies on a regular basis but check them randomly or when information points to someone who is possibly trafficking or making the drug, Hughes said.

However, the police are not the only officials who have access to the logs in Kirksville — the Adair County Sheriff's Department, the State Patrol and the North Missouri Task Force also check the logs, he said.

Hughes said it is important to realize that even with the laws, the meth problem won't disappear, and the laws by themselves will not continue to have an effect unless more efforts are made.

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"We can't stop," he said. "The Meth Coalition has not stopped. We can't stop looking at potential legislation, we can't stop analyzing whether there's any gaps in the system. We have not won the war on methamphetamine."

How the national law works

The Combat Meth Law, a national law similar to Missouri's state law, was signed March 9. Sen. Jim Talent, R-Mo., one of the sponsors of the law, said the law was crucial in the fight against meth.

"The only thing about methamphetamine that [helps us fight it] ... is the fact that you have to have pseudoephedrine to make it, and so that's a vulnerable point for the meth cooks," Talent said. "If we can choke off their access to pseudoephedrine while still allowing consumers to get it, then we knock down a lot of these local labs."

Having a national law prevents meth cooks from buying pseudoephedrine products in states without restrictions and allows for a national registry in the future, he said.

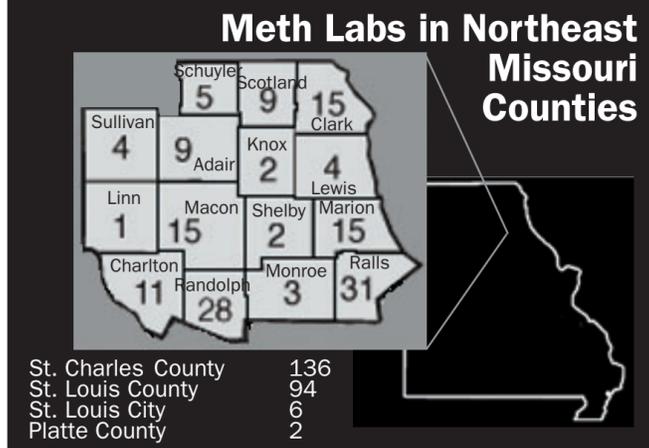
Talent said the national law is stronger than the Missouri law. The national law includes not only the restriction of starch pills but also any medicine containing pseudoephedrine in liquid form, he said.

The law increases the reporting requirements for the international shipping of pseudoephedrine products in addition to introducing domestic restrictions, Talent said.

He said he hopes for a 50 percent to 90 percent decrease in the number of meth labs with the implementation of the new law. He said he also is hopeful that Missouri could get the funding for a computer registry to connect all the pharmacies as soon as possible. Another hope is for drug companies to find substitutes for pseudoephedrine and eventually phase it out of the system altogether, Talent said.

He said he thinks one of the most important long-term aspects of the law is the increase in awareness of the issue in the federal government.

"I think we can say now that the federal government is aggressively into this battle as a result of this bill, and you're going to see a lot of good things happening here because of that," Talent said.



Source: www.mshp.dps.mo.gov

Design by Marissa Sharkey/Index

Mainstreet Market
April 17th – April 21st

Breakfast Special
2 Eggs, Hashbrowns, Sausage Patty and China Cup of Coffee
\$2.80

Sky Ranch Grill Special
Swiss Chicken Griller and Lg. Fries \$5.29

Big City Eats Specials
Melazna Caprese Sandwich- \$4.39

Aztec Chicken Salad-\$5.49

| Classic Line | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Monday | Thursday |
| Closed | Roast Porkloin \$3.25/\$4.55 |
| Tuesday | Italian Lasagna \$2.75/\$4.05 |
| Carved Roast Beef \$2.75/\$4.05 | Southwestern Eggplant \$2.75/\$4.05 |
| Chicken Romano \$2.75/\$4.05 | Friday |
| Black Bean Burrito \$2.75/\$4.05 | Burgundy Mushroom Steak \$2.75/\$4.05 |
| Wednesday | Baked Fish \$2.75/\$4.05 |
| Carved Turkey \$2.75/\$4.05 | Pasta Primavera \$2.50/\$3.80 |
| Stuffed Bell Pepper \$2.75/\$4.05 | Blimpie Special |
| Broccoli Cheese Pasta \$2.25/\$3.50 | Grilled Beef & Cheddar Combo \$5.59 |

Tierra Del Sol Special – Soft Beef Taco \$.65

Jazzman's Special – Tall Latte \$1.89

Freshens Special – Small Sundae \$.89

Bonus bucks and Dining Dollars may be used on Sunday Evening in Mainstreet Market. You may not use your Block meals on Sunday except for our large pizza special.

Thank you for your support and vote. I hope to represent the interest of Kirksville.

-Jill Wimp McCord

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