

Dust Off- A Serious Fatal Hazard

First I am going to tell you a little about my family and me. My name is Jeff. I am a Police Officer for a city, which is known nationwide for its crime rate. We have a lot of gangs and drugs. At one point we were # 2 in the nation in homicides per capita. I also have a police K-9 named Thor . He was certified in drugs and general duty. He retired at 3 years old because he was shot in the line of duty. He lives with us now and I still train with him because he likes it. I always liked the fact that there was no way to bring drugs into my house. Thor wouldn't allow it.

He would tell on you. The reason I say this is so you understand that I know about drugs. I have taught in schools about drugs. My wife asks all our kids at least once a week if they used any drugs. Makes them promise they won't. I like building computers occasionally and started building a new one in February 2005. I also was working on some of my older computers. They were full of dust so on one of my trips to the computer store I bought a 3 pack of DUST OFF. Dust Off is a can of compressed air to blow dust off a computer. A few weeks later when I went to use them they were all used. I talked to my kids and my 2 sons both said they had used them on their computer and messing around with them. I yelled at them for wasting the 10 dollars I paid for them. On February 28 I went back to the computer store. They didn't have the 3 pack which I had bought on sale so I bought a single jumbo can of Dust Off. I went home and set it down beside my computer.

On March 1st I left for work at 10 PM. At 11 PM my wife went down and kissed Kyle goodnight. At 530 AM the next morning Kathy went downstairs to wake Kyle up for school, before she left for work. He was sitting up in bed with his legs crossed and his head leaning over. She called to him a few times to get up. He didn't move. He would sometimes tease her like this and pretend he fell back asleep. He was never easy to get up. She went in and shook his arm. He fell over. He was pale white and had the straw from the Dust Off can coming out of his mouth. He had the new can of Dust Off in his hands. Kyle was dead.

I am a police officer and I had never heard of this. My wife is a nurse and she had never heard of this. We later found out from the coroner, after the autopsy, that only the propellant from the can of Dust off was in his system. No other drugs. Kyle had died between midnight and 1 a.m. I found out that using Dust Off is being done mostly by kids ages 9 through 15. They even have a name for it. It's called dusting. A take off from the Dust Off name. It gives them a slight high for about 10 seconds. It makes them dizzy. A boy who lives down the street from us showed Kyle how to do this about a month before. Kyle showed his best friend. Told him it was cool and it couldn't hurt you. It's just compressed air. It can't hurt you. His best friend said no. Kyle's death Kyle was wrong. It's not just compresses air. It also contains a propellant.. I think its R2. It's a refrigerant like what is used in your refrigerator.. It is a heavy gas.-Heavier than air. When you inhale it, it fills your lungs and keeps the good air, with oxygen, out. That's why you feel dizzy, buzzed. It decreases the oxygen to your brain, to your heart.

Kyle was right. It can't hurt you. IT KILLS YOU. The horrible part about this is there is no warning. There is no level that kills you. It's not cumulative or an overdose; it can just go randomly, terribly wrong. Roll the dice and if your number comes up you die. IT'S NOT AN OVERDOSE.

It's Russian roulette. You don't die later. Or not feel good and say I've had too much. You usually die as your breathing it in. If not you die within 2 seconds of finishing "the hit." That's why the straw was still in Kyle's mouth when he died. Why his eyes were still open. The experts want to call this huffing. The kids don't believe its huffing. As adults we tend to lump many things together. But it doesn't fit here. And that's why it's more accepted. There is no chemical reaction. no strong odor. It doesn't follow the huffing signals. Kyle complained a few days before he died of his tongue hurting. It probably did. The propellant causes frostbite. If I had only known. It's easy to say hay, it's my life and I'll do what I want. But it isn't. Others are always affected. This has forever changed our family's life. I have a hole in my heart and soul that can never be fixed. The pain is so immense I can't describe it. There's nowhere to run from it. I cry all the time and I don't ever cry. I do what I'm supposed to do but I don't really care. My kids are messed up. One won't talk about it. The other will only sleep in our room at night. And my wife, I can't even describe how bad she is taking this. I thought we were safe because of Thor. I thought we were safe because we knew about drugs and talked to our kids about them. After Kyle died another story came out. A Probation Officer went to the school system next to ours to speak with a student. While there he found a student using Dust Off in the bathroom. This student told him about another student who also had some in his locker. This is a rather affluent school system. They will tell you they don't have a drug problem there.

They don't even have a dare or plus program there. So rather than tell everyone about this "new" way of getting high they found, they hid it. The probation officer told the media after Kyle's death and they, the school, then admitted to it. I know that if they would have told the media and I had heard, it wouldn't have been in my house. We need to get this out of our homes and school computer labs. Using Dust Off isn't new and some "professionals" do know about. It just isn't talked about much, except by the kids. They know about it. April 2nd was 1 month since Kyle died. April 5th would have been his 15th birthday. And every weekday I catch myself sitting on the living room couch at 2:30 in the afternoon and waiting to see him get off the bus. I know Kyle is in heaven but I can't help but wonder If I died and went to Hell. Jeff Tracey Lowey, B.A., M.S. Crime Analyst Targeted Enforcement Unit #583