



AMERICAN KRATOM ASSOCIATION

Protecting Consumer Access to Safe, Natural Kratom
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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American Kratom Association Calls for Immediate Identification and Testing of Products Recovered in Ole Miss Student Death Investigations

AKA asks Lafayette County Sheriff to clarify product contents, distinguish natural kratom from synthetic opioids, and disclose testing status

WASHINGTON, D.C. — September 27, 2026 — The American Kratom Association (AKA) is calling on Lafayette County Sheriff Joey East to immediately identify the specific products publicly described as “packaged kratom” recovered during investigations into the deaths of two University of Mississippi students. The AKA also requests independent testing of the recovered products, separate from the toxicology conducted in connection with the autopsies.

The request seeks product names, manufacturers, labeling, available lot numbers, and packaging photographs, along with clarification about whether investigators recovered product contents, empty packaging, or both.

“These families deserve answers grounded in evidence, and the Ole Miss community deserves clear information,” said Mac Haddow, Senior Fellow on Public Policy at the American Kratom Association. “A package labeled ‘kratom’ does not establish what was inside it, whether it was consumed, or whether it contributed to a death. Once authorities publicly identified those packages, explaining those limitations and establishing their contents became critically important.”

Authorities acknowledged that no substance had been confirmed as contributing to either death. Nevertheless, the disclosure prompted widespread coverage associating the deaths with “kratom” before the recovered products’ composition had been publicly established.

The AKA is asking investigators to determine whether the products contained natural kratom leaf, concentrated formulations, chemically enhanced 7-hydroxymitragynine (7-OH), synthetic derivatives, or other undisclosed substances.

Federal agencies have expressly distinguished these product categories. FDA, HHS, and DEA have differentiated natural kratom leaf containing naturally occurring trace amounts of 7-OH from concentrated and synthetic 7-OH products and related synthetic compounds. Their explanation of the targeted federal actions underscores why the products recovered in these investigations must be accurately characterized. [Federal agency explanation](#)

“This distinction is essential to understanding what investigators actually found,” Haddow said. “Referring broadly to ‘kratom’ without identifying the product or explaining that its contents remain unverified risks leaving the public with a conclusion the evidence has not established.”

The AKA’s request calls for:

- **Immediate product identification**, including brand names, manufacturers or distributors, dosage forms, labeled ingredients, and available lot numbers.
- **Direct laboratory testing of recovered contents** to identify relevant alkaloids, synthetic derivatives, and other potential adulterants.
- **Comparison of laboratory findings with labeling claims**, followed by investigation of any evidence of deliberate adulteration or deceptive labeling.
- **Clarification concerning cychlorphine**, including whether testing capable of detecting that synthetic opioid has been requested, whether results are pending, and whether any verified evidence establishes its presence in either case.
- **A public update distinguishing confirmed findings from unresolved questions**, including whether any evidence establishes consumption or a contribution to either death.

Concerns about altered products marketed as kratom are longstanding. In 2016, Lydecker and colleagues found substantially elevated 7-OH concentrations in commercial products and concluded that the findings strongly suggested adulteration. That research reinforces the importance of testing product contents rather than relying on labels; it does not establish what was present in these cases. [Lydecker study](#)

The association emphasized that product testing and post-mortem toxicology answer different questions. Testing recovered material can establish its composition. Determining whether a substance contributed to a death requires interpretation of toxicology alongside the complete medical and investigative evidence.

“We are not asking investigators to blame or rule out any substance prematurely,” Haddow said. “It remains possible that neither natural kratom nor synthetic 7-OH contributed to these deaths. We are asking for precise information, comprehensive testing, and a clear explanation of what the evidence supports.”

The AKA requests prompt acknowledgment and release of available product information. If particular details cannot be disclosed during the investigation, the association asks authorities to explain that limitation and release the remaining information.

“The families deserve the truth, and consumers deserve accurate information,” Haddow said. “Neither is served when an undefined product label becomes a substitute for verified findings.”

About the American Kratom Association

The American Kratom Association is a consumer advocacy organization committed to protecting access to safe, natural kratom leaf products and advancing science-based consumer protection standards. AKA supports age restrictions, accurate labeling, contaminant testing, good manufacturing practices, and strong enforcement against adulterated, mislabeled, synthetic, semi-synthetic, concentrated, fortified, or chemically manipulated products falsely marketed as kratom.

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