The popular synthetic drug methylone, a key ingredient in "bath salts," is simple to order online from China, experts tell The Virginian-Pilot.

In one recent case that ended up in federal court, two Virginia men emailed a lab in China, wired several thousand dollars to an English-speaking customer service representative and received 100 pounds of the drug in the mail, according to the newspaper.

"It's probably easier than buying a case of wine online," said Richard Yarow, an attorney for a man who pleaded guilty to assisting one of the importers wire money to China. "When you buy wine you at least have to show ID" upon delivery, he added.

Methylone is a white crystalline powder. In addition to being used to make bath salts, it also can be snorted, swallowed or mixed into drinks.

The drug costs about $350 per ounce on the street. Importers charge $2,600 to $4,000 per pound.

Methylone was legal in most places in the United States until recently, and was sold online and in some gas stations and head shops. Some states began banning synthetic drugs last year, and more have followed suit this year.

Earlier this month, President Obama signed legislation that bans synthetic drugs.

The law bans harmful chemicals in synthetic drugs such as those used to make synthetic marijuana and bath salts. Bath salts are marketed under names such as "Ivory Wave," "Purple Wave," "Vanilla Sky" or "Bliss."

The drugs mimic the effects of cocaine, LSD, Ecstasy and/or methamphetamine. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, users have reported impaired perception, reduced motor control, disorientation, extreme paranoia and violent episodes.

Bath salts have become increasingly popular among teens and young adults. Packages sent to the United States are subject to inspection, but drug-sniffing dogs usually cannot detect methylone and other synthetic drugs, according to federal agents.

A spokesman for U.S. Customs and Border Protection told the newspaper they cannot prevent people from ordering things off the Internet.