



Hash and burn

Hash oil explosions and the legalizing of marijuana

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With the increasing legalization of medical and recreational marijuana in specific states, we have also seen an upturn in property damage, personal injury cases and even death claims caused by fires and explosions.

Growing marijuana requires the installation of various lights, pumps, filters and fans to accommodate the plant's needs. Growers in this new industry may be inexperienced, and tend to grow a lot of plants and install a lot of appliances to support the process. Many times, we see that the electrical requirements to operate these appliances overrun the system in the facility, often a house, and a fire ensues. Improper wiring and additional breakers installed to meet the increased demand for electricity are often more than the conductors can handle. Couple that with overloaded extension cords, and the likelihood of an electrical fire increases.

Several examples have hit national and local news in the past year. For example:

“Hash oil, a form of concentrated THC from cannabis plants that is created using liquid butane, has been linked with dozens of explosions in Colorado, where marijuana use has been legal since 2012. Similar explosions have been reported in California and Washington State.”

NEWSWEEK | 01/19/15

Hash Oil Linked to Dozens of Home Explosions in Colorado

“A joint task force on drug trafficking says in the first four months of 2014 there have already been 31 explosions, compared to 11 hash explosions the previous year.”

CBS NEWS: DENVER | 05/01/14

Lives Put at Risk as Hash Explosions are on the Rise

“More than a dozen explosions in the Denver area so far this year are being blamed on people cooking hash oil.”

CBS NEWS: DENVER | 04/28/14

Hash Oil Explosions Becoming a Dangerous Trend

Another side effect of the legalization process is the manufacturing of hash oil. People and agencies have learned that hash oil has many uses, and the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in the oil is a much desired commodity in the marijuana industry. Unfortunately, the means to manufacture the oil can be dangerous and often deadly.

One dangerous home method of hash oil production involves using butane, a highly flammable gas that can settle in the lower parts of a structure and accumulate. If an ignition source is present, the resulting explosion can level buildings, injure or kill occupants; and secondary fires can damage the remaining portions of a building as well as surrounding structures.

“The people involved were either not aware of the dangers or, in some cases, knew about the potential hazards and chose to ignore them.”

Since marijuana legalization has occurred, Sedgwick’s subsidiary, Unified Investigations & Sciences, has investigated many fires and explosions associated with growing operations and hash oil production in houses, rental properties, garages and commercial structures.

There are two common threads in these events – the people involved were either not aware of the dangers or, in some cases, knew about the potential hazards and chose to ignore them. This has cost people their lives and caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages.