

Dozen illegal pot grows uprooted in El Dorado County

El Dorado County sheriff's deputies have been making a concerted effort to rid neighborhoods of illegal marijuana grows. In the last four months deputies have closed down a dozen commercial cultivation operations in the Lake Tahoe Basin. They were primarily housed in rental houses.

Complaints from neighbors is how most of them were located.

"These grows also use a great deal of electricity, far more than the residential power grid was designed to deliver to a single residential consumer. Within these houses substandard wiring is the norm, as is extensive damage due to moisture and mold," Sgt. Michael Seligsohn said in a press release. "Frequently structural modifications to the house itself are found in order to accommodate more plants and deliver more water to these plants. The extensive use of chemicals in these grows creates an environmental hazard and in many instances excess chemicals are disposed of through the public utility sewage system creating an added public expense and degrading the water supply. In other instances chemical infused soils have been found dumped in back yards where it runs off onto neighboring properties and it leaches into the ground water creating an environmental hazard."

Proposition 215 allows medicinal marijuana patients to grow for their own needs or people they directly and physically care for. It does not allow growing marijuana as a business.

The fire marshal is also brought out to inspect structures for substandard wiring, water damage, mold, or structural degradation. If there is an issue, power is cut off to the house and the building department will red tag the structure.

In the 12 raids, deputies have seized thousands of plants,

several dozen pounds of processed marijuana, tens of thousands of dollars, and several drug processing laboratories. These grows of 100 to several hundred plants have consumed as much 40 percent of the floor space of a single-family home. In every case the fire marshal's inspection revealed that wiring installed to support the grow was substandard and dangerous.

– Lake Tahoe News staff report