

Use of pot extract a concern on South Shore

By Kathryn Reed

It's not enough to just get high on pot. The latest trend on the South Shore is dabbing.

This is using the byproduct extracted from the marijuana plant. It is concentrated cannabis so it gives the user a stronger high. The end product is called wax because that is what the substance looks like. It's also described as sap-like.

It's in the schools and it's what adults are doing.

"The majority is high school kids using these things. It can be smoked or made into edibles," Douglas County sheriff's Sgt. Pat Brooks, told *Lake Tahoe News*. He said it's an issue with Whittell and Douglas high school students.

Whittell Principal Crespín Esquivál said it's not an issue on campus or something that is being talked about among students that staff is overhearing.

"They know I do K-9 sniffs randomly," Esquivál said. One was done in the last few weeks and no drugs were found on the Zephyr Cove campus. "I hope they are smart enough not to bring any of the crap to campus."

Chad Houck, principal at South Tahoe High School, said the use of wax is not an issue during the school day.

"The way they consume their marijuana is not something we always end up seeing or hearing about," Houck told *Lake Tahoe News*.



A South Shore apartment is damaged from a butane drug explosion.
Photo/Provided

Twenty years ago the normal THC concentration of marijuana was between 3 and 8 percent. Today the pot bought at a collective is 15 to 20 percent concentration. Wax can range from 35 to 90 percent. That is one aspect that concerns law enforcement – the stronger potency.

People don't always know what they are getting because a joint could be laced with wax. And what kids are smoking today isn't what their parents were smoking, so the high is greater with less actual weed needing to be used. The problem is people aren't reducing their consumption.

Wax can be smoked by itself or mixed with the plant, vaporized or converted to an edible.

The drug task force on the South Shore is more focused on adult users and sellers. Those investigators keep finding people making and using wax.

"It's a growing concern within the community," Russell Liles, detective with South Lake El Dorado Narcotics Task Force, told

Lake Tahoe News.

He said marijuana use as a whole is getting worse locally.

“I’ve been told by multiple students that it is easier to obtain marijuana than it is to obtain alcohol in our community,” Liles said. “I think that is a reflection of the amount of marijuana grows in the basin here.”

It’s legal in South Lake Tahoe to grow marijuana indoors with a permit for medical reasons.

“The other issue is the majority of marijuana grows we eradicate. They are capable of producing multiple pounds of processed marijuana bud in a year’s time. We’re talking 20-plus pounds,” Liles said. “I don’t believe any one person needs 20 plus pounds of dried processed marijuana buds for their ailments.”



This marijuana grow on the South Shore was supposedly for one person.
Photo/Provided

The growers tend to be men between the ages of 25 and 35. Liles characterizes them as unemployed and outdoorsy.

When it comes to wax the extraction process through butane is another potential problem because it could explode.

Butane is forced through the plant material. The THC – the

active ingredient in marijuana – then grabs the butane. The butane evaporates off and the wax is left.

“Within the last couple years we have seen more of the butane honey oil labs whenever we eradicate marijuana grows,” Liles said.

Butane weighs more than air. It will float around a room until it evaporates. But if it finds an ignition source first – kaboom! The explosion then causes a fire, of which there have been a few here in the last couple years.

“We’re definitely fighting an uphill battle,” Liles said.