



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

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BUTANE HONEY OIL LAB (BHO) INVESTIGATIONS

In an ongoing effort to protect public safety and enforce local cannabis regulations, Sheriff's Office personnel assigned to the Cannabis Licensing Office are investigating the discovery of an illegal operation using dangerous chemicals and equipment to produce "honey oil."

On Thursday, Dec. 12th, detectives executed a search warrant on Hangar Way in Watsonville. Investigators found more than 1,200 pounds of cannabis in a moving truck, 341 cannabis plants under cultivation, seven rifles including four illegal assault rifles, two handguns and \$50,200 cash. Detectives also discovered an electrical bypass being used to steal power for the illegal operation.

Investigators conducted a follow-up investigation and discovered a related site associated with illicit butane honey oil manufacturing. On Friday, detectives served a search warrant in the 900 block of Browns Valley Road and discovered evidence that a butane honey oil extraction lab had been recently removed from the property. It was suspected that while detectives were serving the search warrant on Hangar Way, the BHO lab was being removed from the Browns Valley Road property. Detectives located an additional two rifles, a handgun, processed butane honey oil, 124 pounds of cannabis, and illicit vape cartridges.

The discovery and disruption of illegal butane honey oil operations follows the discovery another large butane honey oil lab on Commercial Way in Live Oak. During that investigation, detectives located a large commercial butane extraction unit, commercial cannabis processing machines, cylinders of highly volatile butane, various forms of extracted cannabis materials, 9471 pounds of cannabis material, 915 illicit vape pens and evidence of commercial sales and distribution. Following evacuation of neighboring businesses and residents, hazardous site mitigation was led by the Santa Cruz County Department of Environmental Health.

Criminal charges will be sought for those involved with the butane honey oil labs.

Butane hash oil is a cannabis concentrate produced from cannabis material using butane, heat and pressure. Unregulated butane honey oil extraction is a highly dangerous process posing a significant risk to public safety, including fire and explosions.