



COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

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PRESS RELEASE

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ELECTRICAL TAMPERING AND METER BYPASSING

During late 2020 and early 2021, Sheriff's Office personnel assigned to the Cannabis Licensing Office have located numerous electrical bypasses and meter tampering at sites associated with unlawful indoor cannabis cultivations. Electrical bypassing occurs when an occupant installs wiring around an electrical meter or tampers with an electrical meter to receive unregulated power from PG&E.

Electrical meter tampering and bypassing are very dangerous and place the community at risk for wildfires caused by overloaded transformers and electrical grids. Investigations associated with electrical bypasses and meter tampering are referred to the District Attorney's Office for criminal prosecution. In addition, electrical service to homes with bypasses, meter tampering or unsafe indoor cultivation wiring is often disconnected until the system can be repaired and inspected.

In December 2020, investigators located an electrical bypass in the 100 block of Branson Ranch Road, Boulder Creek after the electrical system caught fire. The fire led to the discovery of 910 indoor cannabis plants. During the same month, investigators located 315 indoor cannabis plants in the 300 block of Brackney Road, Ben Lomond and found evidence of electrical meter tampering.

During January 2021, investigators located 761 indoor cannabis plants and evidence of an electrical bypass in the 600 block of Brimblecom, Boulder Creek. Last week, Sheriff's Office personnel located an electrical bypass associated with 232 indoor cannabis plants under cultivation in the 14000 block of Two Bar Road, and evidence of meter tampering in the 100 block of La Cima Road, Soquel, where 420 cannabis plants and 60 lbs. of processed cannabis was seized.

Residents are reminded that electrical bypassing and meter tampering are both illegal and dangerous. Individuals with knowledge of either should contact the Cannabis Licensing Office.