

Marijuana Grow Rooms Becoming More Common

Carl Brahe [Inspection Perfection inc](#)

As medical marijuana becomes legal in more states it also becomes legal to grow at home for certain people. The number of houses and commercial buildings that are used for growing marijuana is increasing. Grow rooms are becoming more common. Grow rooms can cause great damage if improperly built or operated.

Poorly wired or overloaded circuits can result in fire, shock or damage to electronic equipment. The most common danger for grow rooms is overloading the circuitry. An average bedroom may share a 15 amp circuit with another room. This means that the wire is able to safely handle 15 amps of electricity at a time. To keep the wire from overheating from too much electricity flowing through it at one time a circuit breaker, or fuse, is wired into the circuit to stop all electricity flow if it gets to be too great. If the wire overheats a fire can result.

If a grow room is made inside this average room a 1000 watt grow light will require a little over 9 amps to operate. That leaves only 6 amps for all other equipment. Add in 100 watts for a circulating fan and 60 watts for an external light source. That consumes your entire available 15 amps. (amps = watts/110 volts)

A larger circuit breaker/fuse might be used to stop power interruption, but that drastically increases the fire hazard. The wire, and outlets, can only handle so much electricity at a time. Increasing the size of the fuse or circuit breaker will not increase the capacity of the circuit. It will increase the temperature that the wire, and outlets might be allowed to reach. In most cases additional circuits can be easily added by a licensed electrician.

Wiring type and quality as well as the kind and

Another result of excess humidity is the growth of insects. The most common things that are hazardous to your property and environment involve too much water.

Structural damage has been found in illegal grow houses in improper places through joists and foundations. Holes are made for electrical access. Building codes provide detailed information that may be cut. If these guidelines are not followed floors, roofs can break under the load of the building.

It is never a good idea to cut holes in a foundation. The weight rests on the foundation. Any alteration to the foundation above.

In Colorado, at least, most grow rooms and even commercial ones are a few threats to future buyers and residents. People growing for their own use, in their own homes are probably not as likely to cause damage to their own living environments. Ignorance is likely to affect home growers and the people and property around them.

Industrial Hygienist Caoimhin Connell writes: "Remediating a grow house is getting rid of the odor of marijuana. It is difficult and does not usually require gutting the property. Remediating a grow house is getting rid of the odor of marijuana. It is difficult."

As an afterthought Mr. Connell warns that the airborne marijuana can be detected that any person living in a grow house, or in an adjacent room, may require a urine analysis without actually consuming the marijuana. Many jobs require UAs, such as airline pilots and professional drivers. A positive test as a result of the positive test. All residents of multi unit buildings can be affected in this way.

Hazards Discovered in Grow Rooms

- **Electrical**
 - Unsafe wiring
 - Oversized fusing
 - Damaged fixtures
- **Structural**
 - Holes for ventilation and electrical
 - Wood rot
 - Rusted hollow columns
- **Ventilation**
 - Damaged vents from water heater and
 - Rusted gas burning appliances like

condition of breaker/fuse boxes and fixtures should be inspected by a professional. Aluminum wiring and certain breaker boxes increase the likelihood of fire. The cost is little compared to fire and what goes along with it.

Poor quality electrical work may not only endanger your life and property but may also lower resale value. No one objects to having extra, or larger, electrical circuits. It's a plus, but handyman quality, or worse, wiring makes a house harder to sell and will probably sell for less.

Inadequate ventilation can cause several problems. If humidity is allowed to get too high, or if ventilation exhausts in improper places, like attics, chimneys or crawlspaces, mold, wood rot and mortar damage can result. Once moisture content reaches about 19% in building materials for 48 hours mold and rot will grow to begin digesting the building materials. An average cubic foot of air on earth has around 100,000 mold spores. When sufficient moisture is available mold grows.

Ventilated into chimneys the excess moisture can combine with creosote to produce acids that dissolve mortar. Chimney can then leak into living areas. As mortar crumbles bricks/stones are displaced and can fall out.

Growers require ventilation to exhaust heat, moisture and odor, and bring in fresh air, in most cases. Some growers opt for a completely sealed room with no ventilation. A sealed room presents even more dangers to building and occupants.

A sealed room may require a dehumidifier to keep moisture levels in the healthy range. This consumes more electricity. Materials to cover walls to attempt to keep moisture from the building materials may be used. Failure to control humidity can result in portions of the building requiring gutting to correct moisture, mold and wood rot problems.

Plants require CO₂ to breath. Without it they die. If

- Mold from venting to interior, attic
- Deterioration of chimney mortar from
- **Environmental**
 - Pollution from hydroponics wastes.
 - Groundwater
 - Wastewater
 - Improper use of insecticides
- **Health**
 - CO₂ Devices
 - Mold
 - Insecticide
 - Fertilizer

Industrial Hygienist Caoimhin Connell rates
with grow rooms:

- **One of the most hazardous situations commonly found was the presence of ultrafine particles and carbon dioxide (CO₂). The growers typically used propane powered burners to purposely produce CO₂ to promote plant growth. The propane burners inadvertently produce huge quantities of carbon monoxide. As a result, normal residential HVAC is incapable of handling these contaminants and these contaminants can be so high that the EPA has performed a criminal investigation where this happened and a five month old little girl was hospitalized from the grow.**
- **The next most common hazard is the electrical wiring. Very extensive and elaborate wiring is present. The wiring never meets electrical code (open, exposed and convoluted wiring arrangements) were found. The residential wiring system is insufficient for the electrical needs of a grow, and as a result, the grower tap directly into the overhead power lines to bypass the electrical power.**
- **Next greatest hazard is the grow-lights used. They produce massive exposures to UV light. It is energetic enough to break down airborne pesticides, etc) into a soup of other un**

a room is sealed the CO2 is consumed by the plants and must be replenished. Propane powered CO2 generators may be used introducing the possibility of gas leaks and explosions. Where industrial propane burners are used to create CO2 to boost production ultrafine particles and CO can accumulate to lethal levels.

Another method is to vent furnaces and water heaters into the room. This probably works fine for the plants, but put all animals and humans at risk for gas poisoning. Besides CO2 which is fairly harmless to humans gas burning appliances produce carbon monoxide which is deadly and sulfur dioxide which is highly corrosive.

These vents are designed and installed specifically for the appliance. If the venting is altered toxic gases may leak into living areas. If vent gases allowed to cool too much sulfuric acid forms and damages vent pipes and appliances. Hot vent gases could cause a fire.




Excess humidity can cause burners, vent pipes and cabinets of water heaters, furnaces and boilers to rust. Moisture vented into areas with gas burning appliances or not vented from room with furnace air returns, can also cause this.

unexpected and unpredictable health consequences

- The majority of growers in which I have been involved are "growers who essentially consider themselves as "conscientious" and as such don't typically use pesticides, lindane, or the like. More often, they choose products that market themselves as "organic" (the fact that organic compounds are also truly organic is not important).

Issues for home buyers:

- The primary issue for a home buyer will be the presence of hazardous materials on the property. Have hazardous materials been on the property? If the property is on city sewer, it is likely that hazardous materials have been illegally dumped down the sewer. If on septic, the septic system should be evaluated for leaks and corrosives, before it is pumped. The hazardous materials have been killed off or the soils may now contain hazardous materials.
- The second most notable concern will be the presence of hazardous materials on the property. The primary chemicals will be the pesticides used, and the THC from the grow. Also, in areas where drug use/manufacturing and dealing are a common occurrence, grows (even the legal ones). Therefore, testing for hazardous materials is inappropriate (we have only encountered hazardous materials from marijuana). Proper trash-out cleaning should be performed, restoring virtually all of the properties that have been damaged. Some of them will require industrial type cleaning.

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