

# Police: Fire leads to largest seizure of marijuana, hash in Shasta County history

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REDDING, California - Shasta County drug agents say they seized the largest cache of butane-produced concentrated marijuana in Shasta County while investigating a Tuesday explosion allegedly sparked by the marijuana manufacturing method.

“This is a lot closer to a commercial production. This wasn’t just a couple of guys getting together making something for Friday night,” said Sgt. Les James, the Shasta Interagency Narcotics Task Force’s commander.

SINTF agents found 152.5 pounds of marijuana and 7.5 pounds of concentrated cannabis — also known as honey oil — worth some \$136,000 at the west Redding home in the 4000 block of Remington Drive after the blaze, investigators said Thursday.

The explosion was reported in an attached garage about 8:30 p.m. Tuesday night, and the ensuing fire destroyed the garage and damaged part of the house.

By the time firefighters arrived, the occupants had left the scene, and James said authorities still have not found them.

Investigators later determined the blaze was linked to the use of butane to produce concentrated cannabis, James said, so police got a search warrant for the home. During the search, they discovered the large amount of marijuana, hash, scales and other evidence of illegal sales.

James said it was the largest seizure of its type in Shasta County, with most honey-oil operations yielding only a few ounces of concentrated cannabis compared to the 7.5 pounds found in this case.

“Normally we get very little,” he said. “It’s usually so small, it’s burnt up in the fire.”

It was also the largest operation in physical size, James said, noting that most operations have one or maybe up to three tubes used to produce the concentrated cannabis, but this one had more than 20 large tubes.

James said honey-oil productions have been around since the 1960s, but they’ve only gained popularity in the past five years or so.

They’re preferred by some drug-dealers because the THC content in the final product is much higher, James said. Regular marijuana usually has 20 to 30 percent THC, for example, but concentrated cannabis has up to 80 percent, he said.