

Could You Be Living Next Door To A Pot House?

By Rick Sallinger

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LARKSPUR, Colo. (CBS4) – Do you know what’s going on in the house next door? Neighbors throughout Colorado are discovering those living by them are growing pot in large quantities often without the proper wiring or other modifications.

CBS 4 Investigator Rick Sallinger has learned Colorado’s legalized marijuana laws are sometimes being used as a cover to grow pot and ship it out of state.

Earlier this year in Larkspur there was a fire — a big one, but what really startled neighbors was learning what was inside. The basement of the upscale house had been turned into a marijuana grow facility. Dozens of plants were found. Investigators examined the wiring to see if it may have contributed the cause of the blaze.

Hugh Hebert lives right next door.

“We were shocked; the homeowners out there we found out it was perfectly legal, that was what was really shocking,” Hebert said.

Residents of Perry Park shuddered to think the fire could have gutted the neighborhood. They were surprised to find the Spanish speaking family from Florida had obtained a medical marijuana card to grow pot.

Amy Swierczk, who lives in the area, told CBS 4, “The fact that it was legal, if that was a consequence of that, it’s a shame.”

Growing pot takes a lot of electricity. CBS4 found the average power bill was \$2,100 as opposed to \$94 with previous residents.

The people who lived in the house didn’t own it, they rented it presumably for a large sum of money and used the home to grow marijuana. That has others in the area wondering if there are more pot houses with suspect wiring.

Sallinger went to another home which neighbors asked CBS4 to check out. A woman who said she was a Cuban American visiting from Florida answered the door. In Spanish Sallinger asked the woman if they cultivated marijuana there. She said her brother in law grew pot there and she got him on the phone. He acknowledged growing pot, but said less than the 99 plants allowed.

CBS4 found the average power bill there was \$1,525 a month. Neighbors said the owner of the house bragged she was renting it for far above the going rate.

Douglas County Chief Deputy Sheriff Steve Johnson is not speaking about those two houses, but says there are many people trying to take advantage of Colorado's pot laws.

"You know, if you are here setting up a criminal enterprise, for that enterprise to make money when it's legal here your product has to go out of state," Johnson said.

He noted marijuana grown in Colorado can get three to four times as much in other states.

After complaints, Douglas County deputies and building inspectors visited the home and found the wiring was not in compliance for a marijuana grow. A few days later the residents were packing to move out.

The last thing Perry Park neighbors want is another home filled with pot going up in flames.