



ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH

MARIHUANA GROW OPERATIONS ABATEMENT PROGRAM

June 9, 2011

Excerpts:

Innocent children are frequently found in places used for indoor marihuana grow operations and they are exposed to a large variety of health and safety risks. Mould spores and fragments are easily dispersed throughout the house. Inhalation can cause inflammations or allergic reactions. Some moulds are extremely toxic. Health Canada has concluded that exposure to indoor mould is associated with an increased prevalence of asthma-related symptoms.

A multitude of fertilizers and pesticides are used in grow operations. By their nature, pesticides are toxic substances designed to kill or otherwise adversely affect living organisms, often affecting their nervous systems. Chemical residues are tracked throughout these houses on the footwear and clothing of the person tending the grow operation. Young children are often crawling or playing on the floors and have hand-to-mouth behaviours. These behaviours can result in burns, skin and eye irritation, and respiratory problems. During inspections of these houses, public health inspectors will often see that chemicals have been mixed and placed in unlabelled pop or juice bottles.

Because their bodies are still developing a child's rate of breathing in relation to body weight is increased and they have higher metabolic and absorption rates. As a result children are more susceptible to environmental exposures than adults.

The areas actively in use for plant growing and chemical mixing are normally the most critically impacted areas of the premises, and may contain spilled and over-sprayed chemicals, electrical tampering, hanging wires, live wires, carbon dioxide production, mould, structural tampering and explosive materials (compressed gases).

An experienced mould investigator, or environmental consultant, is required to thoroughly investigate both easily accessed and hidden areas for mould growth and reservoirs. Environmental public health requires the

submission of a detailed written assessment report from this consultant, also addressing hazardous materials that may be found.

All grow op related or other potentially hazardous materials remaining on the property are to be removed and properly disposed of. This includes all chemicals found on site. Asbestos in building materials is often found and must be properly contained and removed to ensure the safety of workers and future occupants. Thorough cleaning or removal is required of all surfaces, carpeting and draperies within the premises. The heating and ventilation system, including ductwork, also requires thorough cleaning.

After an acceptable level of remediation work has been completed, which includes the receipt of the scope of work assessment from the environmental consultant and satisfactory air sampling results, on-site re-inspections are carried out both by Environmental Public Health inspectors and City Safety Codes inspectors.

End of excerpts



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