

Task Force Busts Fake Pot Making Operation

Man Was Mixing It in Bathtub



Task Force Photo.

Bathtub “Pot”

During Prohibition in the 1930s, some people resorted to making bathtub gin. On Monday, investigators with the county's drug task force raided a home west of Pacific and found that the tenant was using his bathtub to make so-called synthetic marijuana by soaking vegetation with a chemical compound that mimics the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana. The suspect used fans to dry the material before packaging it for sale. About 10 pounds of finished product was seized.

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[Task Force Busts Fake Pot Making Operation](#) By Ed Pruneau, Missourian Managing Editor The Missourian | 0 comments

It's the first one to appear on the Franklin County drug scene.

Investigators with the Franklin County Narcotics Enforcement Unit raided a home west of Pacific Monday afternoon and found a synthetic marijuana manufacturing operation in the bathroom.

"It's the first-ever synthetic pot manufacturing operation we've found in the county," said Detective Cpl. Scott Briggs with the drug task force.

Briggs said a 46-year-old man who lives in the home had ordered a synthetic cannabinoid solution along with plant material over the Internet.

The synthetic cannabinoids mimic the psychoactive compounds found in marijuana.

"He was mixing the synthetic cannabinoids with isopropyl alcohol then pouring it over the plant material in the bathtub," Briggs said.

He then used fans to dry the material before packaging it for sale.

The suspect was selling the fake pot under the label name "ClimaxXx," Briggs said.

Investigators tracked the man down after receiving information that he was selling the fake pot for \$30 for 5 grams to people in eastern Franklin County.

Detective Sgt. Jason Grellner, head of the drug task force, said the man initially told investigators that he was making the substance here and selling it to businesses in Illinois.

"But based on the information we have, we believe he also was selling it in Franklin County," Grellner said, "and that he was selling to minors."

Task force officers seized approximately 10 pounds of the material, including some that was packaged for sale, some drying in the bathtub and some in bulk, Briggs said.

"We have people who said they heard him bragging about shipping out large amounts," Briggs remarked. "We had information that he was getting ready to move some more of the product."

Briggs explained that it's important to thoroughly dry the product before packaging it to prevent it becoming moldy. "The batch he had drying in the tub was started last Friday," he commented.

Officers found two boxes of the packaged fake pot in the trunk of the suspect's car. Briggs said the suspect told officers that he would sell the packages to stores for \$15 and then they would mark them up to \$30.

"His words to me were 'it was the only way I could make money' and 'it's the only thing people want to buy right now,'" Briggs said.

Briggs said the man told officers that he initially invested \$2,000 for the materials.

Grellner said the man was very cooperative.

"He knew the law. He said he thought it was OK because he had labels stating it was not for human consumption and not to be sold to minors," Grellner said.

The synthetic pot began showing up on the drug scene in the early 2000s and for a number of years has been sold under a variety of names at head shops, gas stations and convenience stores.

Local and state laws were passed to ban the substances, but chemists skirted those for a time by changing the chemical composition of the synthetic cannabinoids.

In the last session, Missouri lawmakers passed new, broader legislation that controls a much wider range of the chemical compounds. That law took effect Aug. 28.

The house raided by investigators is in the 100 block of Hammer Avenue off West Osage Street.

Briggs said investigators plan to seek felony charges after the substance seized is analyzed by Missouri Highway Patrol lab technicians.