

## FIRE FIGHTERS GUIDANCE NOTE # 6-17

### ISSUE:    CLANDESTINE DRUG LABS/MARIJUANA GROW HOUSES

As a result of the number of Clandestine Drug Labs and Marijuana Grow Houses in existence today, there is an increasing risk of firefighters encountering these situations during fire fighting duties. Clandestine Drug Labs are makeshift laboratories for manufacturing controlled substances such as methamphetamine (speed), PCP (angel dust) and designer drugs (synthetics). Once identified these situations should be treated as crime scenes.

The primary concerns for firefighters entering Marijuana Grow Houses or Clandestine Drug Labs are electrocution, propane/natural gas/flammable liquid explosions, structural collapse, chemical hazards, toxic and corrosive atmospheric hazards, improperly contained toxic chemicals and booby traps.

Fire departments should provide adequate training to all personnel involved in Clandestine Drug Lab/Marijuana Grow House responses.

The following information should be included in your department's SOPs/OGs:

- Identifiers of potential Clandestine Drug Lab/Marijuana Grow Houses;
- When a Marijuana Grow House/Clandestine Drug Lab is discovered during fire fighting operations, **exit the area as soon as practical**, notify police, ambulance, hydro and all other appropriate agencies;
- What situations should be identified as Hazardous Material Incidents;
- Appropriate PPE shall be worn;
- Do not attempt to shut off electricity yourself to the Marijuana Grow House (do not shut hydro off at a Clandestine Drug Lab due to possible reactions and the type of operations) or touch any equipment. Contact a hydro company;
- The hydro company cannot guarantee the power has been shut off even after disconnecting the service. Many grow houses will have the hydro by-passed. Caution must still be exercised when working at this incident;

- **If rescue is not required** do not enter a Clandestine Drug Lab/ Marijuana Grow House until deemed safe by all responding emergency agencies. Your first responsibilities should be securing the area, protect yourselves and the public, stay up wind and protect exposures from a safe distance;
- Air quality testing should be considered prior to making entry;
- Identify the factors that contribute to the hazards of a Clandestine Drug Lab/Marijuana Grow House including chemicals, booby-traps, hydro etc.;
- All personnel involved in a Clandestine Drug Lab/Marijuana Grow House should be decontaminated if deemed necessary;
- Coordinate and develop protocol with Local Police, Utility companies and other agencies.