

Safety Alert

(July 17, 2008)



Subject: Marijuana Plantations

Area of Concern: Region-wide

Distribution: All Employees

Discussion:

More than 68,000 pot plants have been found in two marijuana gardens hidden in the Los Padres National Forest. The street value of the confiscated marijuana is estimated at more than \$306 million.

Federal, state and local law enforcement officers seized 54,000 pot plants along the banks of Santiago Creek in Kern County on Monday. On Tuesday, another 14,000 plants were seized in the Gold Hill area in Ventura County.

Forest employees working in remote locations and/or conducting night projects (e.g. owl surveys) should check with LE&I personnel to determine if the project area can be Safely entered.

There are some things to watch for which may indicate marijuana is being grown in an area. These indicators might include:

- Isolated tents in the forest where no recreational activity is present.
- The utilization of trailers with no evidence of recreational activities.
- A pattern of vehicular traffic or a particular vehicle seen in the same isolated area on a regular basis.
- Unusual structures located in remote forested areas, with buckets, garden tools, fertilizer bags, etc.
- Signs of cultivation or soil disturbance in unlikely areas.
- Black piping and trash scattered in forested areas.

If these or other suspicious activities are noted, depart the area immediately and contact LE&I or a local Law Enforcement agency. Be a good witness but don't try to conduct investigations or make contact with suspected growers. Plantations are often tended and guarded by armed subjects who will protect their illegal crops especially during harvest season.

Always use check-in and check-out procedures.