

Know the signs . . .

AS YOU TRAVEL through forest or woodland areas as part of your duties or for recreation, chances are there may be other people in the area. While most people you may encounter are there to fulfill job duties or enjoy leisure activities, some have criminal agendas. In fact, public and privately owned forests are fast becoming areas where criminals conduct a variety of illegal activities, including drug production, theft, vandalism, and arson. People involved in these actions can be extremely dangerous. If you plan to venture into woodland areas, knowing what signs to look for is vital to keeping you and others safe.

This brochure is intended to educate about the signs of illegal activity in remote areas and to provide precautionary guidelines for responding to and reporting suspicious activity.

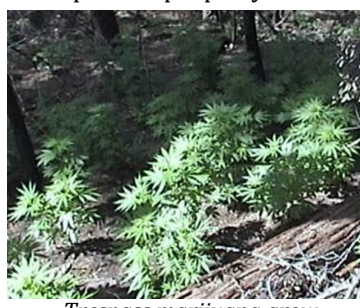
Marijuana

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug in the world and one of the most prevalent drugs produced outdoors. Marijuana may resemble tobacco and generally includes the dried shredded leaves, stems, seeds, and flowers from the cannabis sativa plant.



The marijuana plant contains THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) which produces a mind-altering effect on users. Short-term effects of marijuana use include distorted perception, impaired coordination and balance, and increased heart rate.

Large outdoor marijuana growing operations, some numbering in the thousands, have been discovered on private property and on public lands, including national parks, forests, and recreation areas. Many of these operations, or "trespass grows", are controlled by Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) that ship marijuana state-to-state instead of across the U.S. border.



Trespass marijuana grow

Individuals managing trespass grows may aggressively, even violently, protect their investment. Law enforcement officers have reported these grows are protected by armed individuals who have, in some cases, threatened, pursued and fired shots at officers and civilians. Officers have found a variety of security measures at these camps, such as barbed wire fences, tree stands, crude alarm systems, and



Trespass grow camp

surveillance equipment (radios, walkie-talkies, night-vision goggles). Booby-traps, noisemakers, and small explosive devices are occasionally found at trespass sites.



Noise-maker alarm



Punji sticks



Shotgun shell trap

Environmental Impact

Trespass marijuana cultivation causes serious environmental damage, including destruction of trees and vegetation, wildlife poaching, and use of pesticides that pollute streams and watersheds. Plants are grown outdoors primarily during the spring and summer months with harvesting occurring during early fall. Growers cut down trees, clear native vegetation, and build roads that cause erosion and deterioration of surrounding ecosystems.

To give marijuana plants a controllable source of water, trespass growers dig out existing springs and develop lined ponds or use gravity-flow irrigation systems to divert water from nearby streams. An average trespass grow contains thousands of feet of irrigation tubing and consumes about 300 million gallons of water per square mile. Pesticides used at grows can take years to migrate through the soil and end up in watersheds, posing a significant animal and human health hazard.



Water diversion cistern



Irrigation tubing

Signs of a Marijuana Grow

- Evidence of cultivation, drip-irrigation methods, PVC piping, or terraced gardens
- Unusual structures with garden tools, buckets, fertilizer bags, and large amounts of trash
- Isolated camps, trailers, or tents where there is no recreational activity nearby
- Mesh-covered nurseries or plots containing plants at various stages of growth
- A vehicle regularly seen in the same remote area

Carbofuran & Toxic Pesticide Contaminated Sites



Supplies and toxic waste left by trespass growers

Trespass growers use a wide variety of legal and banned fertilizers, pesticides, and rodenticides to protect marijuana plants and equipment from damage by wildlife. Some have used these chemicals to deter law enforcement investigation. Highly concentrated pesticides, such as carbofuran (Furadan), are increasingly found at trespass grow sites and are responsible for a rising number of wildlife deaths, such as deer and bears, as well as threatened species like the Pacific Fisher and the Spotted Owl. Growers will purposely bait a cultivation site with dangerous chemicals that are intended to kill insects, mammals, and birds that may chew on irrigation lines, forage on plants, or raid food supplies.



Poisoned black bear



Pesticides found at grow

Chemicals found at trespass grow sites include products that contain zinc or aluminum phosphide, diazinon, bromodialone, malathion, and bromethalin. Most alarming is the rising use of the extremely toxic agricultural pesticide, carbofuran. Carbofuran is banned in the U.S., but is increasingly smuggled into the country by individuals working for Mexican DTOs to clear forestland and replant the deforested areas with marijuana. Carbofuran is most commonly encountered as concentrated liquid, bubble gum pink in color, that is often stored in soda or bleach bottles. A few drops are enough to kill a human being.



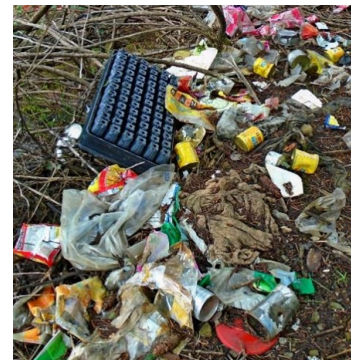
Concentrated pesticides pose a severe danger to the public and specialists who visit or work on public lands. Exposure to neurotoxins, like carbofuran, can result from inhalation, ingestion, eye, or skin contact. Symptoms include headache, blurred vision, nausea, dizziness, vomiting, convulsions, and death.

Pesticides have turned thousands of acres of forestland in western states into toxic trash dumps that are so hazardous, responding law enforcement officers have been hospitalized after accidentally touching contaminated plants or equipment.

Containers storing chemicals or pesticides may lie on the ground for years until they are punctured by animal bites. The simple act of picking up a bottle without gloves may be enough to expose a person to the poison. Heat can also cause bottles containing pesticides to build up internal pressure and explode harmful and flammable gas on contact.

Look for large amounts of trash including . . .

- Pesticide packaging/labels (English/other language)
- Powdery or crystallized substances spread on plants on or around site
- Pesticide application equipment such as spray bottles
- Standing water surrounding sites containing fertilizers and pesticides
- Unmarked mixing bottles filled with milky-white, pink, or unknown liquid
- Presence of dead birds or insects on or around a carcass



Bait locations with or without dead wildlife in close vicinity. (Bait may be tainted carcasses, food, or food containers, colored blocks or pellets)

Safety First!

DO NOT ENTER an area that contains materials suspected to be toxic. Contact with concentrated pesticides can send you to the hospital or can be fatal.

DO NOT OPEN OR TOUCH ANYTHING in the vicinity of the camp. Toxicants can be present on surfaces, plants, containers, waste, and carcasses. Containers containing chemicals may explode when touched.

LEAVE THE AREA IMMEDIATELY and contact local law enforcement only when you are safe.

Clandestine Labs

A clandestine lab is a rudimentary lab that is used to produce illegal drugs such as methamphetamine, MDMA, and LSD. Clan labs and their operators can be extremely dangerous. Methamphetamine production may result in explosions or fires that can



Exploded lab



Active meth lab

result in injury or death from contact with the lab or lab waste. Some users “cook” methamphetamine in small batches using two-liter soda bottles or other small containers. The bottles are highly dangerous if opened and have the potential to cause flash fire explosions and release toxic fumes. Discarded bottles contain a residue or sludge that is poisonous—**DON'T TOUCH!**



Meth in soda bottles

In addition to illegal drug activity, urban-associated crimes such as theft, vandalism, and arson occur in rural forests and parks. When visiting or working in these areas, it is important to always be aware, alert, and cautious. Report unusual sightings or incidents to local law enforcement — only after you have relocated to a safe area.

Theft

Crimes committed on public lands are often similar to those which occur in urban areas, such as vehicle or property theft. Some illegal activities, such as theft, or “poaching”, of wildlife and plants, are unique to public and private forests and parks.

Poaching can take a variety of forms, such as harvesting trees or plants without a permit, or hunting wildlife without a license, during closed season, or using artificial



Illegally harvested tree



Poached elk

light as a hunting aid. Offenders have also stolen artifacts from Native American and archeological sites.

Vandalism and Arson

While drug production and theft are often committed for financial gain, motives for crimes such as vandalism and arson can range from revenge to attention-seeking. Common targets of vandalism on forest lands are road signs, gates, logging and forestry equipment, and structures. Vandals have also damaged and defaced live trees and archeological sites.



Defaced petroglyph

Wildland arsonists set fires that endanger citizens, put firefighters at risk of injury or death, and result in economic losses to forest landowners and communities. Arson in forest lands is a crime that carries an enormous and uncontrolled potential for loss of life, destruction of environmental resources, and damage to property.



Vandalized equipment



AVOID CONFRONTATION

DO NOT RUSH INTO AREAS YOU ARE UNFAMILIAR WITH. If you come across suspicious activity, such as marijuana grows or clandestine labs, leave the area immediately and notify law enforcement as soon as you are safe.

AVOID AN ENCOUNTER IF YOU CAN. Don't try to assist law enforcement by making contact and attempting to get more information.

DO NOT APPROACH OR CONFRONT SUSPECTED INDIVIDUALS. Do not indicate in any way you are suspicious of their activities.

IF YOU CANNOT AVOID AN ENCOUNTER, TRY TO BE AS CASUAL AND NON-THREATENING AS POSSIBLE. Appear ignorant regarding any suspicious activity. Be prepared to explain why you are in an area (camping, fishing, hiking).

Safety Guidelines

As a general rule . . .

Be aware of your surroundings at all times

Make sure people know where you are. Travel in pairs, if possible. Maintain the ability to communicate.

Do not approach suspects or enter the suspicious area.

Make every effort to **avoid suspicious packages or equipment**, they may be highly volatile or toxic.

Do not take photographs or collect evidence. Do not touch, smell, or move anything.

Immediately leave the area. The safest exit point is typically along the same route you entered.

As soon as you are safe, write down a detailed description of the location (landmarks, GPS coordinates), people, vehicles, and signs of suspicious activity you observed.

Please report to local law enforcement ASAP!

Don't let these precautions scare you away from visiting and enjoying Oregon's natural beauty. Just be aware!

My Law Enforcement Contacts Are:

Sheriff's Office: _____

City PD: _____

State Police: _____

Land Management Agency: _____

Company Contacts: _____

Website www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov
oridhidta.org

References: www.iercecolology.org
www.fs.fed.us
www.blm.gov
www.justice.gov/usao-or

To request copies of this brochure, please contact the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA program at 503-934-2020.

This publication was prepared on behalf of the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Program by the Oregon-Idaho HIDTA Investigative Support Center. July 2019.

Keep above visor for reference

Resource Guide to Criminal Activity on Forestlands

Third Edition



Illegal Drugs, Theft, Vandalism, and Arson



Unclassified