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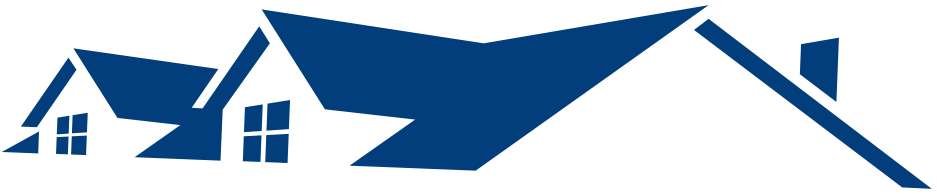
**POLICE
SCOTLAND**

Keeping people safe

Cannabis Cultivations

What I should know as a Landlord?





Cannabis Cultivations What I should know as a Landlord?



"Cannabis farms are becoming more prevalent in residential properties and can lead to thousands of pounds of damage along with a costly and difficult eviction. Landlords need to be vigilant in order to reduce the risk of becoming a victim of this crime."

John Blackwood - Scottish
Association of Landlords.

Commercial cannabis cultivation can affect you as a landlord or letting agent. It can cause significant damage to your property, which your insurance may not cover, and could result in loss of rent whilst your property is repaired.

The criminals involved in commercial cannabis cultivation often have links to serious organised crime, which can include human trafficking. When these individuals establish cannabis cultivations in residential properties, the problem is brought into local communities.

Police Scotland, in partnership with Crimestoppers and Scottish Association of Landlords, has produced this leaflet to spot the signs of cannabis cultivations and offer advice regarding steps you can take to help protect yourselves and your properties and how you can report suspicious activity.

When rental properties are used to cultivate cannabis, landlords often pay the price. Local communities and other tenants can also be affected.



If organised criminals use your rented property, you could:



How to spot the signs of commercial cannabis cultivations:

- Find your property is damaged due to unauthorised structural changes (which property insurance may not cover or could result in increased premiums).
- Expose your property to increased risk of fire due to excessive cabling and flammable material
- Lose rent during eviction and repair periods.
- Have to deal with hostile tenants (can be frustrating / frightening / dangerous).
- Be held liable by the property's energy supplier for outstanding energy bills.
- Incur penalties, including loss of property use, property damage resulting from police action, and in some cases asset seizures.
- Distinct sweet pungent smell.
- Plant growing equipment, e.g. lighting and ventilation equipment (there may be a constant buzz or large ducting tubes protruding from windows).



- Windows blacked out (plastic or heavy fabric on windows, usually hidden by net curtains or blinds so as not to look suspicious from the street).
- Unsociable comings and goings.
- Tenant may only visit once or twice per week.
- Intense lighting for 18-24 hours a day (especially attics, basements).
- High levels of heat and condensation (resulting in peeling paint, mildewed walls or carpet, heavy condensation on the windows).
- Lots of cables, or electrical wiring being tampered with and bypassed circuitry.
- A sudden jump / fall in electricity bill.
- Significant vegetable material being thrown away (plant stalks, roots, root balls of cannabis plants discarded when plants are harvested).
- Other indicators include: silver / white sheeting with white walls to reflect light during growing; and bags of soil or fertiliser stored in the premises / outbuildings.

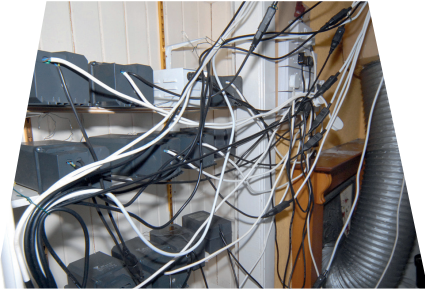
Case Study

"We were informed of a serious flood in one of our properties which was caused by the tenant growing cannabis within the flat. A report from our insurers showed that the water leak had caused serious water damage to the flat and to a neighbouring flat below. This resulted in floors, walls and ceilings having to be removed for structural reasons. The tenant immediately stopped paying rent and was not to be seen again. The repairs took several months which made us lose rent. The damage to our flat cost the insurance company £42000 plus VAT. This is excluding the damage caused to the neighbour's property."

Property Owner - Edinburgh



Alterations to property are often seen in properties with cannabis cultivations. Safety concerns due to:



- Holes cut into walls and ceilings to make way for wires and tubing.
- Internal walls removed, putting the property at risk of collapsing.
- Floors sodden with water and at risk of giving way under foot.
- Heavy cultivation equipment insecurely fastened to ceilings and walls.
- Positioning of equipment may cause injury.
- Chemicals used can be harmful to humans.

Risks of Fire



Due to the intense lighting, excessive wiring and amount of flammable material, cannabis farms are serious fire hazards. They are often in top floors or lofts, which mean that when a fire takes hold, it spreads rapidly. The fire may only become apparent when it is well developed.

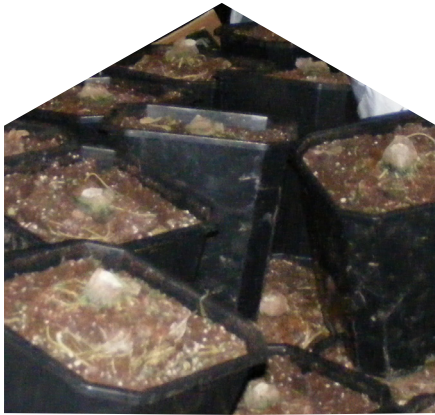
How can I spot the signs of criminal intent in a potential tenant?



What steps can I take to protect myself and my property?

The following indicators can identify applicant's intent on establishing a cannabis farm:

- Willingness to pay rent months in advance, particularly in cash.
- Tendency to pay in cash combined with a lack of visible means of support.
- Requests for you not to visit the premises.
- Requests to pay rent at a meeting place other than the premises.
- Unusual fortification of individual rooms.
- Installation of expensive exterior fortifications (e.g. window bars)
- Use a form of photo identification of potential applicants.
- Ensure identification has not been altered and is not fake.
- Watch for telephone, water, gas and electricity accounts in different names.
- Require more than one type of identification for joint applicants.
- Check the prospective tenant's current address.



What measures can I take to improve the security of my property?

- Check the prospective tenant's rental history.
- Obtain any mobile phone numbers of prospective tenants.
- Obtain car registration numbers.

Be aware that many criminals use a 'front couple'. They will appear to be a genuine, respectable couple seeking to rent a property for their own use. After they have been shown around the property by the landlord and take possession of the property they will disappear without a trace. They will then be replaced by criminals who will convert the property for the purposes of cannabis cultivation.

- Regular visits once the tenant has taken up residency (some strains of cannabis have a life cycle of as little as 8-9 weeks in the indoor environment).
- Keep shrubs and hedges trimmed to ensure visibility around the tenancy.
- Use motion or light sensor lighting over entrances to keep the property visible.



Insurance

What do I do if I suspect my property is being used for cannabis cultivation?

- Display dwelling numbers and building names clearly so emergency services can identify the correct property if called.
- Encourage community involvement and take notes of neighbours' complaints / concerns.
- Exchange phone numbers with neighbours and encourage them to report suspicious behaviour to yourselves, police or Crimestoppers.
- Make regular visits to any of your empty properties.

Some insurance providers may not cover you for loss of rent or damage resulting from criminal activity. You may wish to speak to your provider to check the level of cover.

Contact Police Scotland on 101
call independent charity
Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

In an emergency you should always call 999.







scotland.police.uk



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