

## More than 10,000 cannabis plants seized by Avon and Somerset Police in 2021



Following the recent discovery of significant cannabis farms in the Keynsham and Taunton areas, we're reminding the public of the key signs that could indicate that cannabis is being grown illegally in your community.

So far in 2021, we've recovered 10,154 plants from 73 cannabis farms in Avon and Somerset, with an estimated 'street value' of more than £4m.

In 2020, 135 grows were discovered, housing 14,500 plants – the highest number we've found since 2014.

Cannabis farms are highly dangerous and pose a serious risk of fire. Often, the electricity meter has been bypassed and seriously overloaded electrical circuits run close to water-filled pipes. Plants grown upstairs in a building can also cause floorboards to rot, presenting the danger of collapse.

It is also important to consider that sometimes the people working in the 'farms' are victims of human trafficking and working against their will.

Every cannabis farm we destroy helps prevent a vicious circle. The plants won't end up as street deals, the profits won't go on to fund other crime, and they won't ruin lives or pollute our communities.

DI Angela Burtonwood said: "We take the supply of cannabis extremely seriously and anyone found to be involved in the supply of cannabis will be dealt with robustly.

"Cannabis cultivation not only feeds a multi-million pound black market in increasingly potent and dangerous cannabis, which can have lasting physical and mental health effects on users – it is also a key driver in modern slavery.

"We also recognise the huge amount of theft of energy from the national grid and with our partners at Western Power Distribution and we are working hard to tackle this.

"I encourage people to observe what is happening in their community and tell the police if they are aware of anything suspicious or drug related activity. Every piece of intelligence police receive is acted upon."

Peter Lowe, Security Co-coordinator at Western Power Distribution said: " These criminal activities place our staff, the police and the public at risk, because the illegal electricity connections that are made to supply the cannabis farms are made without any safety consideration.

"It can also cause damage to our own electricity network, which could result in power cuts for neighbouring homes and businesses."

Steve Quinton, AF&RS Risk Reduction Manager, added: "Illicit drug factories often have unsafe wiring which can lead to increased risk of fires, they pose a significant risk to both our firefighters tackling those fires and local residents living in the area.

"We're passionate about keeping our communities safe and we're asking local people to report any suspicious activity to the police so they can act swiftly to prevent these dangerous fires."

### **Signs to spot for a property being used to cultivate drugs:**

- A powerful distinctive sweet, sickly aroma
- Frequent visitors throughout the day and night
- Blacked out windows
- Chinks of bright light throughout the night
- Birds gathering on the roof, particularly in cold weather
- In winter, snow melting unusually quickly on the roof
- High levels of condensation on windows
- Noise from fans
- Large amounts of rubbish, including compost bags
- Electricity meter being tampered with/altered and new cabling, sometimes leading to street lighting.

For more information, visit [Crimestoppers](#).

If you are concerned or have suspicions that cannabis is being grown in your area, report it to police on 101, or via our website at [www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/drug-dealing-and-use/](http://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/report/drug-dealing-and-use/) .

Alternatively, you can report 100% anonymously to the charity Crimestoppers on 0800 555111 or online at: <https://crimestoppers-uk.org/give-information/forms/give-information-anonymously>.

To learn more about energy theft, you can also visit <https://www.stayenergysafe.co.uk/>.