



Fresno County Sheriff's Office

Margaret Mims, Sheriff-Coroner

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News Release

Tony Botti – Public Information Officer
Office: (559) 600-8137
Cell: (559) 977-0379
E-Mail: tony.botti@fresnosheriff.org

Narcotics Detectives Uncover Elaborate Marijuana Growing Operation Inside Kingsburg Home

On Tuesday afternoon, the Fresno County Sheriff's Narcotics Enforcement Team seized approximately 800 marijuana plants, which were growing inside a home on the 11200 block of E. Kamm Ave. in Kingsburg. Deputies responded to the house because they received information that two large marijuana plants were growing in the side yard. Deputies found those two plants, along with many more.

Deputies contacted two women inside the house who were renters of the property. Upon opening the door, they smelled a strong odor of marijuana emitting from the house. They entered the home and discovered several plants growing in a front room. Deputies then obtained a search warrant, which legally allowed them to conduct a more thorough search of the property. Inside a back bedroom, they found a plastic bin containing approximately 12 lbs. of dried, processed marijuana ready to for sale. Deputies also located a loaded shotgun in the room.

Deputies searched the basement of the home and found an elaborate hydroponic system. The suspects installed individual air conditioning units, fans and an irrigation system to help hundreds of plants grow. The equipment involved with the operation is estimated to cost tens of thousands of dollars.

Deputies arrested Julia Ortiz, 34 and Elizabeth Ortiz, 33. The two women have been booked into the Fresno County Jail. They face possible charges of marijuana cultivation and intent to sell marijuana.

So far in 2015, the Fresno County Sheriff's Narcotics Enforcement Team has eradicated more than 200,000 marijuana plants. Marijuana can sell for \$4,000 per pound on the east coast of the United States.

Fresno County enforces a strict ban on all cannabis cultivation, both indoors and outdoors. Violation of the ordinance could result in several consequences:

- 1. Growers can be arrested on a felony charge.**
- 2. Growers can face heavy fines starting at \$1,000 per plant.**
- 3. Property owners, including family members, can be fined too.**
- 4. Very short timelines to appeal citations and fines.**
- 5. Prop. 215/SB 420 compliance will not stop enforcement.**
- 6. Additional fines, interest, legal fees and costs of abatement can be charged.**
- 7. County can place lien on property for unpaid fines.**

The Sheriff's Office takes all tips seriously and encourages the public to report suspected marijuana grow sites. If you are aware of any type of illegal drug activity, report it anonymously by calling the Narcotics Hotline at 1-800-660-1086 or email: drugtip@fresnosheriff.org

