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# The InfoGram

Volume 13 – Issue 6

February 7, 2013

## Hash Oil Explosions Increasing Across U.S.

Some explosions in residences and hotels around the country are being traced back to a process using butane to extract and concentrate compounds from marijuana. The extraction method appears to be more common on the west coast; reported [fires and explosions](#) have blown out [windows](#), [walls](#), and caused numerous [burn injuries](#).

Depending on conditions at the scene, these explosions can be misidentified as pipe bombs (because of the extraction vessel used) or methamphetamine lab explosions. First responders, fire marshals, bomb squads, and drug task force personnel should receive training to identify items used in hash oil extraction.

Butane is necessary for the process and is available over-the-counter in 8-ounce cans. The extraction process uses one whole can and multiple cans will likely be at the scene. Butane is highly explosive, colorless, odorless, and heavier than air and therefore can travel along the floor until it encounters an ignition source.

The process also uses isopropyl or anhydrous alcohol, both flammable; extraction vessels; glass dishes; ether; and coffee filters. The resulting substance is a thick yellow-orange oil called hash oil, honey oil, Butane Honey Oil (BHO), or dabs.

Initial explosions can lead to secondary explosions and fires. In states with legalized use and availability of medical marijuana, these incidents appear to be increasing. In some of these states the legality of the actual production process is still in debate.

(Source: [Seattle Times](#))

## Cyber Attacks on Government Networks Rising

The Secretary for the Department of Homeland Security said in a recent speech cyber attacks “are coming all the time. They are coming from different sources, they take different forms. But [they are increasing in seriousness and sophistication](#).”

Attacks and breaches on federal department networks gain the biggest headlines, but state departments are not immune. Last year, South Carolina’s State Department of Revenue was hacked, resulting in the [theft of over 3 million unencrypted bank account numbers](#), copies of state tax returns, and social security numbers connected to those accounts. Last month, [Alabama’s state network](#) was breached. Officials are releasing few details since it is being treated as an ongoing criminal investigation.

*The InfoGram is distributed weekly to provide members of the Emergency Services Sector with information concerning the protection of their critical infrastructures.*

Michigan announced the [development of a new training facility](#) that gives cybersecurity professionals the tools needed to detect and prevent attacks in a real-world setting. [Michigan Cyber Range](#) is used to train public and private organizations as well as government personnel [through a variety of courses and events](#). This proactive program was developed in hopes of stopping breaches.

A cybersecurity bill failed to pass in Congress and new legislation is in consideration. The president is expected to [issue an executive order](#) addressing cybersecurity.

(Source: [Reuters](#))

## Vapor Releases at Industrial and Refinery Sites

Vapor releases at industrial sites, either planned or accidental, pose potentially deadly incidents for industrial and neighboring community fire departments.

The release of a [vapor cloud caused a massive fire](#) and nearly killed 12 workers at a Chevron refinery in 2012. The leaked gas-oil [mixture was over 600 degrees](#) and required [“20 response vehicles and 80 firefighters”](#) in addition to the plant’s personnel. The U.S. Chemical Safety Board (CSB) is [still investigating](#).

A [hydrocarbon release in 2010 from a refinery in California](#) caused a two-alarm response from local fire departments. The same plant also had scheduled vapor releases that year and another accidental vapor release the following year which required contacting local emergency dispatch.

An Industrial Fire World article discusses two sulfur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) releases at a nearby fertilizer plant and how the incidents were [managed by the on-site refinery fire chief](#). The article details the play-by-play decision making process during the incident including instituting sheltering in place of all 3,000+ contractors, closing the state highway, and shutting down the plant’s air handlers.

(Source: [Industrial Fire World](#))

## Annual World Fire Statistics Report Released

The [World Fire Statistics Centre](#) (WFSC) has released its annual report for 2012. The WFSC is part of the Geneva Association, an international think tank of the insurance industry whose mission is to identify and reduce fire losses and costs.

The WFSC collects, compares, and reports country data including number of deaths due to fires, deaths as a percentage of the population, monetary losses, cost of firefighting operations, cost of fire protection for buildings, and selected wildfire data.

The [October 2012 report](#) (PDF, 1.28 Mb) contains data from 2007-2009. The breakdown within the report gives a quick overview of how the U.S. fares when compared with other countries in terms of dollars spent and resources committed.

The majority of the 26-page report is commentary on worldwide trends, concerns, and vulnerabilities. The editorial discusses the ongoing issue of the wildland-urban interface (WUI), obviously a growing issue around the world. Included is an excerpt from the [U.S. Fire Administration’s report Fire Death Rate Trends: An International Perspective](#) (PDF, 584 Kb). Problems occurring when fire is combined with other disasters, natural or manmade, are also discussed.

(Source: [Geneva Association](#))

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