

Two men implicated in alleged hashish lab explosion on Underwood Road

Written by Administrator

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Two people who were allegedly involved in the operation of an illegal hashish oil lab in a house on Underwood Road drove one of the men's vehicles to get help with burns and injuries suffered in the December 26 explosion.

The two men, identified by the Sheriff's Department as Thomas A. Simpson, 58, and Jade Darin "J.D." Thompson, 27, reportedly drove to Scott Memorial Hospital after the explosion. They had apparently applied packages of frozen corn to their wounds immediately after the incident, according to evidence found later by officers with the Sheriff's Department. Chief Deputy Don Campbell and Deputy Joe Guarneri were dispatched to the house when the incident was reported by a neighbor who had heard the noise caused by the explosion just after 2 p.m.

According to case report information, most of the manufactured home's north end was detached and laying in the yard when Deputy Guarneri arrived. Debris was scattered on the property. The officers searched the home for any other persons who may have been affected by the explosion. No one was found.

According to Deputy Guarneri, a "...strong odor..." of marijuana was detected in a room on the home's west side. A chemical smell was coming from the damaged north end, he observed.

Officers were informed that objects may have been hidden by the men in a fence row. Deputy Guarneri said they found metal containers and a box there. A trash bag in the yard contained some marijuana. Blood was found on the bags of frozen vegetables and on the home's front and back doors.

Because of the chemical smell, the Indiana State Police clandestine meth lab team was called. Additionally, the officers called Scott Memorial Hospital and advised staff there to notify them if burn victims arrived.

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While the two deputies and Detective Ray Dawson, also with the Sheriff's Department, continued their investigation at the scene, Sgt. Brian Hall of Scottsburg Police Department went to the hospital and talked with Simpson and Thompson. He later reported that Thompson said he lit a cigarette and "...the house exploded." The men were told they were suspected of having a methamphetamine lab at the residence.

Just after 5 p.m., a search warrant was obtained for the damaged home. As the ISP lab team looked at debris, it was determined that the men were purportedly trying to make hashish oil by cooking a quantity of marijuana. Butane tanks they were allegedly using were the apparent source of the explosion. Additional marijuana was found scattered in the yard as were burned coffee filters and a dish of green residue.

In talking to neighbors, officers learned that one man who heard the explosion drove to the manufactured house. He said he saw the debris in the yard and one man inside the damaged room and another out in the yard. The man outside told him, "We are okay...everything is okay..." When he rolled down his vehicle's window to talk to the man, he said the strong chemical smell caused him to roll the window up and back out of the property. He said he called 9-1-1 and reported the explosion. What authorities now think the two men were doing was manufacturing a marijuana-based product called "honey oil." The substance is essentially a jelly-like substance that is more potent. A scan of Internet stories revealed that several similar explosions have been reported in Colorado, one of the first states to make the use of marijuana legal for people over the age of 25. Others were reported in California.

The danger in such home operations comes from the need to cook high-grade marijuana buds to extract the brownish-black oil. Butane burners are generally used, research indicated, but not all of the gas is consumed in the process. If the area is not highly ventilated, the gas can build up. The simple act of lighting a cigarette can cause an extremely violent explosion, such as what occurred at 5353 South Underwood Road on December 26.

According to information received, one of the men has been released from the hospital. The other is apparently still hospitalized with more severe injuries. Information about the incident has been sent to the office of County Prosecutor Jason Mount for review.