



Butane Honey Oil – A New Threat

What is Butane Honey Oil?

Also known as BHO, or wax, butane honey oil is a waxy, oily substance containing a very high concentration of THC extracted from marijuana. Users smoke a small amount of this wax (known as dabbing) to get high.

How is BHO made?

BHO is made through a very simple process using supplies that can be purchased in any hardware store. BHO kits are also commercially available online, and hundreds of tutorial videos exist on YouTube. He or She packs marijuana into a tube, which is commonly made of PVC or glass, but could also be metal. This is usually done with cheaper marijuana or with the scraps from the marijuana that the user has already smoked, such as stems, seeds, debris. The tube has a filter screen on one end and a fitting inside a cap on the other end, to accept a butane canister. A canister of butane is also needed (such as one used to refill lighters), a small Pyrex-type dish to collect the wax, and a larger pan or dish filled with warm water. The user holds the pipe vertically, and inserts the butane canister into the fitting on the end of the pipe. This process allows the liquid butane to flow down through the tube and over the marijuana, which extracts the THC. This creates a yellow brown liquid that drips out into the dish, where it begins to gently boil due to the warm water underneath it. This will boil the butane gas out of the liquid, leaving only a THC-rich gel. The gel is then spread into a thin layer, and allowed to cool, eventually becoming a wax. Users then take a small amount of this wax, place it into a heated pipe, where it vaporizes and can be smoked.

This process allows the user to increase their high more quickly. Please reference the images of the BHO process below.

What is the threat to us?

When made outside and in a well ventilated area, creating BHO could be safe. However, because people making BHO are using butane (explosive range of 1.8 to 8.4 percent), it is dangerous when created in enclosed spaces. There have been multiple instances in Massachusetts in the past year where people making BHO inside of their homes, sheds, or garages have caused explosions and fires. Once the butane is boiling off in the dish, the atmosphere almost instantly reaches an explosive level and only needs an ignition source to spark something. Tewksbury Fire responded to a reported explosion in a single family home and arrived to find all of the windows blown out of the house. There was active fire inside, and multiple victims laying in the front yard, two of which had life threatening burns. More recently, Sterling Fire responded to a reported house fire where it was later determined that the cause was from BHO production. Luckily there had been no major damage or life threatening injuries.

What actions should we take?

If we are called to respond to a fire or explosion where BHO production is suspected there are a few simple steps we can take to ensure our safety. Metering the home to make sure no explosive environment exists is paramount. The correction factor for butane is 0.7, so responders need to multiply their reading by that number to get the true explosive level in the atmosphere. After metering, if there is active fire, be careful to watch for butane canisters, which can explode when exposed to high heat. Most BHO producers will have multiple canisters of butane, both full and/or empty. Law enforcement needs to be notified of any findings as well. Though marijuana will soon be legalized in the Commonwealth it is still unclear as to whether or not producing BHO will be too.

**Thank you for reading!
(pictures below)**

