



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Friday, Dec. 8, 2023

# City of San Diego Alerts Local Businesses to Dangerous Synthetic Intoxicating Hemp Products

## LETTER DIRECTED TO RETAILERS WARNS OF UNLAWFUL SALES AND ENFORCEMENT ACTION IF NOT DISPOSED OF WITHIN 30 DAYS

SAN DIEGO – In order to ensure compliance with the laws regulating the sale of cannabis, the City of San Diego sent an [open letter](#) to non-cannabis businesses classified as tobacco shops that sell intoxicating hemp-derived products. The letter was sent on Dec. 1, alerting the retailers to dispose of or surrender unlawful and dangerous products that may be on their shelves within 30 days.

The letter was sent by the City's Development Services Department (DSD) Cannabis Business Division, which oversees the administration of such businesses in the city, including permitting compliance. It comes in the wake of an ongoing law enforcement investigation that recently led to multiple arrests and the recovery of a sizable amount of evidence.

San Diego Police (SDPD) and other law enforcement agencies served several search warrants in San Diego, Chula Vista and Spring Valley leading to the seizure of hundreds of pounds of unlawful and potentially dangerous intoxicating hemp, as well as other unlawful products, cash and multiple firearms.

**"The unlawful distribution of these products is something the City takes very seriously," said DSD Cannabis Business Division Deputy Director Lara Gates. "They represent a danger not just to businesses but to the health and well-being of our communities. Our goal is to ensure both customers and dispensaries are safe and in compliance with all necessary regulations, and to protect against those who'd operate outside of them."**

This investigation stemmed from community complaints submitted to SDPD of illegal dispensaries operating near schools and homes. Products claiming to be "Delta-8 THC" or "Delta-10 THC" as well as other, similar synthetically derived "hemp-based" products are considered cannabis per state law, requiring proper state and local licenses. Per national poison control centers, numerous cases of these products leading to hospitalizations and deaths have been reported.

These actions and instructions are in accordance with California Assembly Bill (AB) 45, which created new definitions and regulations for such products alongside the California Department of Public Health. Full details on AB 45 compliance can be found on the [California Legislative Information website](#).

Businesses that may be selling these unlawful products have been instructed to dispose of them or surrender them to SDPD for disposal within 30 days of the original letter. After that 30-day window, enforcement action may be taken as appropriate.

The City's Cannabis Business Division can be reached at [DSDCannabis@sandiego.gov](mailto:DSDCannabis@sandiego.gov) for any questions or concerns.

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