

Allergic to pot: Couple says legal grow makes them sick

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Saturday, March 30th 2013

Link to article and videos: <https://katu.com/news/local/allergic-to-pot-couple-says-legal-grow-makes-them-sick-11-20-2015>

PORTLAND, Ore. - A Southeast Portland couple claims their neighbors' legal marijuana grow is making them sick.

The Petersons said they have allergic reactions about every nine weeks, which also happens to be the average time it takes for marijuana plants to blossom.

Dr. Jan Gurley with the San Francisco Department of Public Health says it's absolutely possible for someone to be allergic to marijuana plants.

"As we know, more serious allergies are emerging in different groups of people, particularly children," she said. "Allergies are so specific to different people. Some people are allergic to one kind of plant, some are totally fine with it."

Gurley studied the side effects of medical marijuana before California legalized it in 1996.

"I was actually tasked with implementing prop 215," Gurley said.

The Petersons don't smoke pot, but they say their next-door neighbors do. The smell of the marijuana grow is making them ill.

"My face gets completely tingly and just paralyzed," Gloria Peterson said on Friday. "And my sinuses burn, my throat burns, my eyes burn from it."

And it's not just their health at risk. The Petersons say the marijuana smell and smoke take a toll on their dogs.

Gurley, who was not speaking on behalf of the San Francisco health department, said second-hand pot smoke is similar to that of cigarette smoke, but there's little professional research on it. She believes health departments around the country will have to start dealing with zoning rules and other regulations.

"As widespread marijuana use occurs in states where it's legalized, people will become more concerned how other people's behavior is infringing on their health."

KATU News tried reaching out to the Peterson's neighbors, but they never came to the door Friday or Saturday. Gloria Peterson says the relationship between them is "strained," to put it mildly.

"They've destroyed the livability of the neighborhood," she said.

The Petersons say this is the wrong place for their neighbors to grow and smoke pot, legal or not. Especially with Little League teams practicing in a nearby park.

The Petersons want the city to step in. But Portland police say because the medical marijuana is legal, this is a complex problem that may need to be addressed by multiple city bureaus.

Gloria emailed Mayor Charlie Hales and Portland's city commissioners on Friday. The mayor's spokesperson said Friday night they were unaware of the issue.

KATU plans to follow up next week.