



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Midwest Regional Forensic Laboratory First in State with New THC Test

The Midwest Regional Forensic Laboratory housed at the Anoka County Sheriff's Office is the first forensic laboratory in the State of Minnesota to have a method in place and validated to determine the THC quantity of a plant or liquid sample. This new method went live on March 25, 2020 when the laboratory began accepting cases for testing.

With the passing of the 2014 Farm Bill, the Hemp Pilot program allowed licensed growers to grow hemp in the state of MN. According to the MN state statutes, industrial hemp is not marijuana if THC concentration is below 0.3%. THC is the psychoactive compound found in marijuana.

Other than food products, there are currently no regulations as to what products can be made or sold with the hemp plant. This made our job difficult as we were unable to determine if an item was from a hemp plant or a marijuana plant with our current methods of testing. Since a hemp plant and a marijuana plant are the same species of plant, they would yield the same results.

In order to differentiate between hemp and marijuana, we validated a method that will enable us to determine the percentage of THC in plant material and/or liquid extracts. Our new methods of testing will include a color test, gas chromatography/mass spectrometry, and high-pressure liquid chromatography (HPLC). Using the HPLC, we will be able to determine if the concentration of THC is below 0.3%. Since purity determination will not be necessary for all plant material/liquid extracts; we will only be doing them as needed for criminal charging purposes.

This new method of testing is important due to the rising popularity of hemp products being marketed. The testing will allow us to say with scientific certainty that the sample came from a hemp plant. This is important since hemp is legal to possess and consume in the state of Minnesota, but marijuana is not.

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