

While California is having problems keeping their medical marijuana dispensaries to a reasonable number, and is even looking at intervention from the Department of Justice, Maine's future with medical marijuana is just beginning. California has no set number of locations for their dispensaries, but Maine has given the OK for just 8 that will be located around the state.

Since the initiation of the law, citizens have been concerned about crime and safety issues surrounding the availability of a drug that is illegal for some, being OK for others. This fall, police in Sagadahoc County were put in an odd situation when a licensed marijuana grower had his plants stolen and called the police to report the crime. New England Post spoke with Sergeant Hamilton of the Sagadahoc County Sheriff's office explained that a Woolwich man, who had a license to grow prescription marijuana called the police after 3 of his plants were stolen. "This was a forced entry into a greenhouse. The structure had a motion detector and alarm in place, but it had rained a lot the night before and both failed. People broke in, stole the plants, and dragged them through a cemetery at the back of the property to an awaiting vehicle." Sgt. Hamilton went on to say, "This is a Class C felony. The street value of the plants is estimated at around \$3,000."

New England Post spoke with detectives from: Knox, and Lincoln County who said that they had not heard any calls of prescription marijuana theft in their jurisdiction. However, Sheriff Dennison from Knox County said, "It puts police in a weird situation, because Federal law says we can't give it back, but Maine law says we have to. It's confusing for everyone." when asked about what police would do with stolen, recovered prescription marijuana.

Sgt. Hamilton voiced similar concerns about the state and federal law gap when asked what the department would do if the stolen marijuana was recovered, "My gut says yes. This was his property that he has a license for in Maine. However, Federal law says it's illegal. Honestly, I would have to call the District Attorney's office and ask them what to do."

Becky DeKeuster of Northeast Patients Group <http://www.northeastpatientsgroup.org/>, the non-profit organization that will run 4 of the states 8 dispensary locations, doesn't foresee security as an issue for her dispensaries. "We have to grow all of the medication we provide on-site, so there aren't any transportation issues. Each location has cameras, and secure access by card and key code. Only prescription holders are allowed inside, no guests. It's very secure and meets or exceeds measures taken at a regular pharmacy." Currently, dispensaries are only open by appointment, which adds another level of security.

As the Maine Medical marijuana law reads <http://www.maine.gov/legis/lawlib/medmarij.html>, citizens must obtain a prescription from their doctor and then they can choose to either grow their own plants, with up to six flowering plants at a time, or obtain marijuana from a distribution center. Patients may not opt for both.