

Colorado town awaits test results of pot ingredient in water

22 July 2016

Bottled water was distributed to residents of the small Colorado town of Hugo on Friday as officials investigate the possibility that a marijuana chemical has contaminated the water supply.

Officials announced Thursday that some field tests had found THC, marijuana's psychoactive ingredient, in the [water](#), but they were awaiting the results of more definitive laboratory tests Friday which would also tell how much THC is in the water, if its presence is confirmed.

State health [officials](#) say it's too soon to know whether THC in the water would intoxicate people who drink it. Experts doubt adding raw pot to water would make it intoxicating.

No illnesses have been linked to the water in Hugo, a town of about 730 people some 100 miles southeast of Denver, said Lincoln County Public Health Director Susan Kelly. Commercial marijuana cultivation, product manufacturing, testing facilities and retail marijuana stores are banned in Hugo, although they are legal elsewhere in the state.

THC was detected in tests conducted with field kits, although other field tests were negative, sheriff's Capt. Michael Yowell said. The field tests weren't capable of showing how much THC was in the water, but only whether the chemical was there, he said.

Investigators found signs that one of Hugo's five wells had been tampered with, but they hadn't determined whether someone deliberately tainted the water, Yowell said.

The FBI and the Colorado Bureau of Investigation are helping with the case, he said.

Yowell said a company that administers employee drug tests was the first to detect THC in Hugo's water. A tester sampled tap water, assuming it

would be negative, but it was positive.

The effects of drinking THC-laced water would depend on the concentration, the amount consumed and how quickly it was consumed, and officials don't yet have that information, said Mark Salley, a spokesman for the state Department of Public Health and Environment.

THC commonly must be heated to have an intoxicating effect, a process called decarboxylation, and that's why weed is commonly smoked or burned in oil, not eaten raw.

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