

Pennsylvania Workers to Look for Drug Labs

PITTSBURGH, Nov. 22 (AP) — Nearly 600 utility workers in 41 Pennsylvania counties have been organized into a network to tell the police of possible drug laboratories.

Line workers, meter readers, billing clerks and other employees were trained last month by the police to look for signs of clandestine laboratories that make the stimulant methamphetamine.

The authorities say signs of an illegal drug laboratory include chemical odors coming from barns or houses, discarded chemical containers, fans whirring through the night, unusually high consumption of water or electrici-

ty, extreme fluctuations in power use and large cash purchases of land and equipment, especially by new residents.

"We're seeing more and more of these labs in rural areas, where the neighbors are not on top of them to report things like noxious fumes, noise and fans running all the time," said Walter Williams, training coordinator for the Pennsylvania attorney general's Bureau of Narcotics and Investigations.

Tom Hoy, a spokesman in Washington for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, said, "Because rural electric linemen are out

there in the countryside, they do come across things," adding, "But this is the first time I know of where they're being trained or alerted to some kind of drug surveillance."

Teams Are Set Up

Thirteen Pennsylvania electricity cooperatives have established "drug awareness teams" as part of a program managed by the attorney general's office. The cooperatives, nonprofit power companies whose customers are voting members with a voice in how the utilities are run, all serve rural areas, where police patrols are thin.

Rural electric workers "travel the

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back roads and are in a better position to see things that normally go unnoticed," said Joseph Dukick, spokesman for the Pennsylvania Rural Electric Association of Harrisburg.

"We told our people not to investigate," he said. "If they see something suspicious, turn and run in the other direction and contact the police."

Employees Endorse Program

Utility officials said most employees endorsed the program, although some worried they would be seen as spies by their neighbors or could be placed in danger.

"They want to handle it in confidence and keep a low profile," said Ed De-zich, manager of the Southwest Central Rural Electric Cooperative. "They don't want to put themselves at risk."

The American Civil Liberties Union

sees a "tremendous potential for abuse" in the program, said Barbara Wolvovitz, executive director of the Pittsburgh chapter.

"There's nothing wrong with a lineman or anyone else reporting something suspicious to police," she said, "but if fluctuating electricity use is the sole basis for going to court to get a warrant, then we have a problem with that. There are many innocent reasons for a fluctuation to occur."

Mr. Hoy said his national association, representing 1,000 rural electric systems in 46 states with 25 million customers, was developing a similar national program to identify drug problems in rural areas and determine "what role rural electricians can play in solving the growing drug problem in rural America."

No Parole in Manson Case

FRONTERA, Calif., Nov. 23 (AP) — For the eighth time, Patricia Krenwinkel, a member of Charles Manson's "family," has been denied parole for her conviction in the murders of the actress Sharon Tate and six other people. In denying parole on Wednesday, a panel of the Board of Prison Terms cited the brutality of the 1969 murders. Ms. Krenwinkel, 42 years old, is serving a life sentence.

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