

California Loses Fourth Cannabis Lab License Amid Crackdown

California Regulators Revoke Cannabis Testing Lab License Amid Crackdown on Unscrupulous Practices

California regulators have revoked the license of another cannabis testing laboratory, Verity Analytics, based in San Diego County. The revocation, reflected in public records from the California Department of Cannabis Control (DCC), is part of a broader crackdown on problematic labs in the state's legal marijuana industry. Verity is now the fourth cannabis testing lab to lose its permit since December 2023, underscoring a heightened focus on consumer safety and integrity within the legal market.

Emails sent to Eric Aguilera, listed as Verity Analytics' principal, were not returned.

Another California Testing Lab License Revoked

According to DCC spokesperson David Hafner, Verity Analytics joins a growing list of labs losing their licenses due to regulatory violations. Since December 2023, four testing labs have had their licenses revoked:

NCALC (THC Analytical): License revoked on Dec. 20, 2023.

ProForma Labs: License revoked on Feb. 16, 2024.

California Cannabis Testing Labs: License canceled on July 24, 2024.

Many of these revocations stem from issues such as [THC-potency inflation and improper lab practices](#). ProForma Labs, for instance, lost its license after a reference lab found chlorfenapyr—a banned pesticide—in a cannabis product that had been cleared for retail sale. Despite the clear presence of the pesticide, ProForma Labs had failed to report any detection, a serious breach of testing standards.

Sharp Decline in Active Cannabis Labs

The loss of Verity's permit is part of a broader reduction in the number of active cannabis testing labs in California. In January 2024, the state had 37 licensed testing labs. By late September, that number had dropped to 27—a 27% decline. According to DCC data, the decrease coincides with stricter enforcement of testing standards.

Hafner emphasized that these enforcement actions are designed to protect consumers and maintain the integrity of the cannabis market, stating, "DCC's enforcement actions, particularly against testing laboratories, underscore the Department's focus on protecting consumer safety and the integrity of the legal cannabis market."

This crackdown suggests that some lab operators may have opted to close their businesses rather than face the risk of citations and fines for noncompliance.

Unscientific Practices and Unqualified Staff

Verity Analytics was cited and fined in January 2024, with records indicating the lab was accused of inflating THC potency by as much as 32%. The DCC also suspended Verity's license in April, citing 12 violations, including unsound scientific practices.

The April 19 suspension notice revealed that Verity's lab director, Parinaz Rostamzadeh, was clearing samples for pesticide contamination based on visual inspection of chromatograms—an unscientific method—rather than relying on proper testing protocols. The DCC pointed out that “reporting non-detects that are not based on any recognized scientific criteria may allow for the passing of pesticide samples that should fail testing.”

In addition to improper procedures, Verity also employed an analyst who lacked the required degree and experience to work in a licensed cannabis lab. These lapses, combined with other operational issues, contributed to the revocation of the lab's license.

Banned Pesticide Discovered

Each of the four labs that have lost their licenses over the past year was involved in THC-potency inflation, according to DCC records obtained. For instance, ProForma Labs reported that a batch of cannabis flower contained 24% THC, while independent DCC testing revealed the actual potency was only 16%.

In a more serious case, ProForma Labs also failed to detect chlorfenapyr in two samples, a banned pesticide that was later discovered by a DCC reference lab. The pesticide was present at levels well below what the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency considers dangerous, but its very presence raised concerns about the trustworthiness of the lab and California's regulatory oversight of cannabis products.

Suspended Lab Returns to Business

In February 2024, Yuba County-based California Ag Labs faced a two-month permit suspension due to incomplete documentation and missing test methods for pesticides and mycotoxins. According to Robert Myers, California Ag Labs' principal, a bureaucratic error triggered the suspension, which was quickly resolved. The lab's license has since been reinstated.

However, the suspension highlighted the importance of maintaining accurate records and submitting them on time to avoid regulatory penalties. California Ag's suspension notice detailed that the lab had failed to prove its testing methods for heavy metals, mold, and pesticides were valid in late 2023.

Growing Calls for Stricter Enforcement

For years, cannabis operators have expressed concerns about the lack of enforcement against labs that inflate THC potency or fail to detect banned substances. The recent revocations are being welcomed by many within the industry, who believe stricter regulation is essential for restoring confidence in the testing system.

Zachary Eisenberg, vice president of San Francisco-based Anresco Laboratories, stated that while revoking licenses is a positive step, it's too late for many businesses that have suffered due to unethical lab practices. “The fact that they're revoking licenses and not renewing licenses is certainly a step in the right direction,”

Eisenberg said. He also noted that several labs that refused to engage in unscrupulous practices have already gone out of business.

Whistleblower Lawsuit Raises Additional Concerns

Amid these enforcement actions, former DCC Deputy Director of Laboratory Services Tanisha Bogans filed a whistleblower lawsuit claiming she was terminated after raising alarms about cannabis products containing Category 1 pesticides—banned chemicals considered extremely harmful. According to Bogans, her warnings were ignored by both DCC officials and state law enforcement.

This lawsuit adds another layer of scrutiny to California's cannabis testing industry and raises questions about the effectiveness of the DCC's internal oversight. With the possibility of harmful pesticides making it to consumers, regulators are under increasing pressure to act swiftly and transparently.

Risks to Public Health Remain

It is still unclear how much potentially tainted cannabis has reached consumers through these shuttered labs. While product recalls have increased in recent months, many industry operators agree that recalls for products sold more than two months ago are largely ineffective since much of the cannabis has already been consumed.

As California's cannabis industry continues to evolve, regulators and operators alike are grappling with how to ensure that cannabis products remain safe, accurately labeled, and free from harmful contaminants. Strengthened enforcement, particularly in lab testing, is crucial to maintaining the integrity of the legal market and protecting consumer health.

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