

# More Cannabis Recalled Over Yeast, Mold, and Bacteria Concerns

## Maine Expands Recall of Recreational Cannabis Over Mold Contamination

**October 27, 2024** – The Maine Office of Cannabis Policy (OCP) expanded an earlier recall of recreational cannabis products produced by Nova Farms after further testing revealed contamination above the state’s safe thresholds. The recall, issued Thursday, affects additional preground flower, prerolls, and blunts sold across the state since late August. The expanded recall reflects growing concerns about product safety and testing standards for cannabis sold in Maine’s dispensaries.

### Expanded Recall Details

The updated recall specifically includes the strain “Frosted Cookies” in preground flower, prerolls, and blunts sold between early September and mid-October, along with “Frozay” preground packages available from late August to mid-October. These products, sold at multiple dispensaries statewide, were found to contain microbials, including yeast and mold, at levels above the limits considered safe by Maine’s health standards.

This marks Maine’s second recall of cannabis products in recent months, following an initial recall of products by Cannabis Cured, a cultivator and retailer based in Fairfield, in September. The new recall expands on the previous list of tainted products, underscoring the importance of regulatory oversight as Maine’s recreational cannabis market matures.

### Products Affected by the Recall

The expanded recall encompasses a broad range of cannabis products, including different sizes and types of flower and prerolls. Here are the specific products under recall:

**Frosted Cookies Strain:** The recall includes 1/8-ounce and 1-ounce packages of preground flower, half-gram prerolls (sold individually and in packs of five), and half-gram blunts (sold in four-packs). These items were available from September 1 through October 13.

**Frozay Strain:** Recalled items include 1/8-ounce, 1/2-ounce, and one-ounce packages of preground flower, along with various preroll sizes (half-gram, 1.5-gram, and 3-gram) and blunts. These products were sold from August 30 through October 14.

The Office of Cannabis Policy advises customers who purchased these products to check the batch numbers on their purchase receipts to confirm if they match those identified in the recall.

### Retail Locations Involved

In addition to the 14 stores impacted by the September recall, the latest recall has added nine new retail locations where the contaminated products were sold:

**Brilliant Buds**, Bethel

**Cannabis Haven**, Center Street, Auburn

**Cannabis Haven**, Union Street, Auburn

**Cannabis Haven**, Waterville

**Humble Family Farms**, Lewiston

**Kind & Co.**, Portland

**OG Cannabis**, Eliot

**Sinsemilla**, Gardiner

**The Great Atlantic Puffin Company Adult Use**, Bridgton

This broadened list of dispensaries emphasizes the extensive distribution of the recalled products, which have circulated in numerous retail outlets throughout Maine.

### **Health Concerns Associated with Mold-Contaminated Cannabis**

The recall was initiated after testing revealed unsafe levels of microbial contaminants in the products. Consuming cannabis tainted with mold can lead to a range of health issues, especially for individuals with weakened immune systems or respiratory conditions. Potential symptoms from inhaling mold-contaminated cannabis include:

Sinus problems

Allergic reactions

Headaches

Fatigue

Dizziness

John Hudak, director of the Maine Office of Cannabis Policy, emphasized that consumer safety is paramount and that testing protocols are designed to ensure products meet the state's health standards. However, despite these standards, "data irregularities" between testing results reported to the OCP and results from independent audit testing raised concerns. These irregularities ultimately led to the expanded recall.

### **Regulatory Challenges in Cannabis Testing**

The recall highlights potential weaknesses in Maine's cannabis testing protocols. While state regulations mandate stringent testing of recreational cannabis products to ensure they meet safety standards, inconsistencies in test results between producers and independent audits have raised questions about the effectiveness of current protocols.

According to the OCP, the recent recalls point to a need for improved monitoring and verification of test results submitted by cannabis producers and third-party laboratories. As recreational cannabis grows in popularity, ensuring consistent quality and safety across the market becomes increasingly critical.

### **Lack of Response from Nova Farms**

Nova Farms, a Massachusetts-based company with dispensaries in Maine and New Jersey, has not responded to inquiries regarding the recalls. Attempts to contact company representatives via phone and email went unanswered. The absence of a response from Nova Farms leaves questions about the company's testing processes and how it plans to address the concerns raised by the OCP.

As cannabis products in legal markets like Maine expand in variety and reach, companies like Nova Farms must navigate increasingly rigorous state and federal scrutiny. To maintain consumer trust, producers are expected to uphold robust testing and quality assurance standards. A proactive response from Nova Farms regarding the recall could help clarify the steps they are taking to prevent similar issues in the future.

### **Consumer Guidance and Safety Precautions**

The OCP urges consumers who suspect they may have purchased contaminated products to verify batch numbers and, if necessary, return the products to the point of purchase. Many dispensaries are offering refunds or exchanges to customers affected by the recall, ensuring that consumers who may have been exposed to unsafe products receive proper assistance.

Maine's cannabis consumers are advised to pay attention to product labels and batch numbers, particularly in light of the state's recent recalls. While contamination can occur, even in regulated markets, verifying product information and staying informed about state-issued recalls can help consumers make safer choices.

### **The Future of Cannabis Testing and Safety in Maine**

The recent series of recalls has sparked conversations about potential improvements to Maine's cannabis regulatory framework. Testing for contaminants like mold and yeast is a fundamental component of the safety protocols established by the OCP. Yet, as the recent recalls reveal, maintaining consistency across the entire testing process can be challenging, especially as Maine's cannabis market expands.

Regulatory agencies may consider revisiting existing guidelines to ensure they align with the evolving landscape of cannabis production and sales. Strengthening the verification process for lab testing and implementing regular audits could provide additional layers of consumer protection. These improvements could also help identify potential risks before products reach the market, mitigating issues like the recent mold contamination.

### **Industry Response and Calls for Standardization**

The expanded recall in Maine also underscores the need for standardized cannabis regulations across states. With each state implementing its own cannabis policies, inconsistencies in testing standards can complicate product safety assurance, especially when products are transported across state lines. Advocates argue that federal oversight or interstate regulatory agreements could create more uniform standards, benefiting consumers and producers alike.

As more states legalize cannabis, aligning state-level policies could streamline testing requirements and help eliminate disparities. Standardized policies may also support smaller cannabis businesses by reducing

regulatory burdens and enabling access to best practices for quality control.

## **A Continued Focus on Consumer Safety**

As the cannabis industry in Maine and nationwide continues to develop, consumer safety remains at the forefront. The Office of Cannabis Policy's commitment to transparency and swift action on product recalls plays a crucial role in building trust within the cannabis market. However, as these recalls show, ongoing vigilance and improvements to the regulatory framework will be necessary to protect public health.

The expanded recall in Maine serves as a reminder of the potential risks within a rapidly growing industry and highlights the importance of robust regulatory oversight. As the industry matures, maintaining high standards for product safety and testing will be essential to ensuring the long-term success and sustainability of the cannabis market.

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