



News Release

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OLCC Minor Decoy Activity Returns After Pandemic Prolonged Hiatus

Eugene area alcohol retailers perform poorly during checks

PORTLAND, Ore. – Inspectors from the Oregon Liquor and Cannabis Commission (OLCC) are again fanning out across the state checking to see if OLCC licensees are allowing minors to purchase alcohol, and so far the results are disappointing. In two recent Minor Decoy Operations (MDOs) in the Eugene region, about **two out of three retailers failed** to properly check identification and sold alcohol to an OLCC minor decoy. **The combined compliance rate for the Eugene MDOs was 35%.**

“The state has never seen these kinds of terrible results in alcohol sales compliance checks since the program was initiated in the 1990’s,” said Steve Marks, OLCC Executive Director. “Every licensee that engages in the sale of alcohol needs to immediately place a priority on the proper training of servers and store clerks.”

The resumption of the MDO activity comes after the OLCC temporarily idled the program because of other pandemic priorities which coincided with the curtailment of in-person activities at licensed bars, restaurants and other alcohol retailers. Also, prior to the start of the pandemic the agency had difficulty recruiting volunteer decoys.

In restarting the program, the agency has carried out a total of five regional operations across the state checking compliance at 64 locations selling alcohol. **Two MDOs in Portland produced compliance rates of 70% and 85%** and a **single MDO in the Salem region resulted in a compliance rate of 88%**, which is the best result so far.

At this point, the **statewide compliance rate is 63%** since the MDO activity started again. OLCC’s objective is to have 90% or more of its licensees in compliance. Individual MDO reports containing more details [can be found on the OLCC website.](#)

Inspectors from the OLCC’s Marijuana Program are also ramping up MDO activity, and recently completed an operation in the **Medford region** that resulted in a **67% compliance rate.**

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OLCC Resumes Minor Decoy Operations

The OLCC's compliance division started phasing in MDO activity in May, 2022 gradually expanding the effort as the agency recruited and trained new minor decoys. Instead of using volunteers, the agency now *employs* minors between 18 to 20 years old, who look under the age of 26, to carry out the MDO activity supervised by OLCC inspectors.

The OLCC and local law enforcement agencies frequently partner in operations together monitoring minor decoys who attempt to purchase alcohol. If a clerk or server makes a sale, they as well as the licensee are subject to fines and penalties for the sales violation.

Due to the high rate of non-compliance, the OLCC plans to aggressively conduct compliance operations across the state to ensure alcohol service licensees have better controls in place and are taking the proper steps to ensure public safety in their communities. OLCC Commissioners are aware of the high failure rates and will consider increasing penalties for the sale of alcohol to minors.

The Commission [took similar action in 2018](#) when marijuana retailers had low compliance rates for selling to minors, in order to remind the industry of the importance of this public safety issue, and to get an immediate improvement in results.

Inspectors from OLCC's Compliance Division are available to provide identification checking classes to alcohol and marijuana retailers at no cost. Information on how to contact an OLCC regional office to schedule an in-person class can be found [here](#) on the OLCC website. Licensees can find an [ID checking tip sheet](#) on the OLCC website.

Executive Director Marks noted that the industry has gained expanded privileges to sell and deliver alcohol in recent years. Along with those expanded privileges came an expectation from Oregonians and the legislature that the alcohol industry would take compliance seriously. According to Marks, the industry apparently hasn't gotten the message.

"The statewide compliance rate as it currently stands is abysmal," said Marks. "These results are fully unacceptable and be assured that OLCC understands its profound responsibility to Oregonians to ensure sales of alcohol are made properly. We will take action."

[OLCC Minor Decoy Operation reports](#)

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