

Ten out of 22 businesses fail recent alcohol sales compliance checks

From the Craig, CO, Daily Press.

Craig — The Moffat County Sheriff's Office recently conducted an investigation to determine if local establishments were selling alcohol to individuals under legal drinking age. The results were "disappointing," and suggest that more effective alcohol sales training is necessary, Craig Police Capt. Jerry DeLong said.

On Jan. 11, law enforcement officials and representatives from Grand Futures, a substance abuse prevention program, tested 22 Moffat County businesses licensed to sell liquor. Of those businesses, 10 failed.

"I thought local businesses were doing a better job," DeLong said, adding that previous checks yielded "much better" results.

The investigation was conducted with the aid of one underage participant who entered bars, restaurants and liquor stores in Moffat County and attempted to purchase alcohol. The checks are conducted in "a very controlled environment" with two or three officers stationed nearby, DeLong said.

The department conducts these investigations annually to ensure local businesses are complying with state and local laws that prohibit alcohol sales to individuals younger than 21 years old. This year's compliance check results were a step down from previous investigations.

"I think overall it shows that there should be better training for liquor licensees," DeLong said.

Training for Intervention Procedures is one such program. The training covers various topics, including how to determine if an identification card is fake and identifying signs of an underage purchaser.

Under state law, the Craig City Council can mandate the training to establishments cited for selling alcohol to a minor, City Attorney Kenny Wohl said. The council acts as the city's liquor licensing board. These trainings are issued at the council's discretion.

"In virtually all cases, the violator will be required to provide training for servers and cashiers, usually provided by the TIPS program," Wohl said.

No local ordinance exists that makes the training mandatory for businesses that sell alcohol to underage individuals. Chad Kiniston, Moffat County Grand Futures executive director, intends to help change that.

Grand Futures works with local law enforcement, schools and the 14th Judicial District to prevent substance abuse in Moffat County, Kiniston said. He will administer TIPS next month to businesses that failed the compliance checks and any others that wish to attend.

The director said he hopes to raise support for a city ordinance that would make TIPS mandatory for all businesses that sell alcohol to the underaged.

Kiniston intends to raise support for the ordinance through the Youth Wellness Initiative, a grassroots organization created under the Northwest Colorado Community Health Project to prevent underage drinking in the Yampa Valley.

For Diane Miller, Health Project executive director, the recent compliance check tests indicate that liquor licensees require additional training.

"Alcohol retailers are really asking for help," she said.