
Sting hits stores selling to minors[Print Page](#)**Businesses are cited for completing alcohol, cigarette sales to decoys from 15 to 18 years old.****By Chris Wiebe**

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GLENDALE — Police ticketed dozens of store owners and cashiers Tuesday during a citywide sting targeting markets that sell alcohol and tobacco to minors.

Undercover officers visited 44 markets and convenience stores during a three-hour period Tuesday, sending in decoys between the ages of 15 and 18 to try to buy alcohol or tobacco products, Glendale Police Officer John Balian said.

Fourteen people were arrested on suspicion of either selling alcohol to a person under the age of 21 or selling tobacco products to a minor, Glendale Police Sgt. Scott Johnstone said.

Store cashiers sold alcohol to the underage decoys at 25% of the stores they entered, and more than 50% sold the decoys cigarettes, he said.

The high number of citations for illegal cigarette sales was not surprising because tobacco stings are relatively new in Glendale, Lt. Bruce Fox said, after the City Council passed an ordinance in October 2007 requiring retailers to purchase tobacco-selling permits.

"Our alcohol decoy efforts have been ongoing, so I think there's a word in the community that those are potentially going to happen," he said. "However, the tobacco efforts are relatively new with the city cracking down on illegal tobacco sales by requiring tobacco permits."

Officers cited the owner of KV Tobacco on East Colorado Street for the third time for selling tobacco to minors, Fox said.

Since the permitting process for many tobacco retailers is ongoing, the effect citations will have on retailers' continued ability to sell tobacco products still needs to be worked out, he said.

But KV Tobacco is not in an enviable position, he said.

"They're going to have a lot to answer to once that permit crosses my desk," Fox said.

During one alcohol sting — at Glendale Ranch Market on South Central Avenue — a cashier sold a 15-year-old boy a half-gallon of vodka, Balian said.

Managers at Glendale Ranch Market declined to comment Thursday.

Arrested store employees face misdemeanor charges, Balian said, and the businesses, which all had valid licenses, could face fines or license suspension, he added.

"The Police Department will continue to be aggressive on arresting anyone that sells alcohol or cigarettes to our youths," he said.

A City Council ordinance requires all businesses selling cigarettes and other tobacco products in Glendale — which number more than 240 — to obtain a special permit to do so.

Store owners would be cited for the first two violations, and their permit could be suspended for a third offense.

"They're going to end up with revocation requests or be subject to a status of 'monitored,'" Neighborhood Services Coordinator Sam Engel said. "The intent is if you guys aren't going to act responsibly, we are

going to take away the privilege of selling tobacco in our community.”

City officials and residents rallied behind the ordinance in the wake of a 2006 survey that revealed 24% of tobacco retailers in Glendale were willing to sell to minors

Some convenience store owners in Glendale who were not cited in the sting credited their unwavering policies.

“Basically, we card anybody who looks under 35 years of age — that’s the rule of thumb,” said John Garcha, who owns 7-Eleven franchises in Glendale. “We don’t try to guess if they’re 21 or older. But sometimes they’re 30 years old or whatever, but we have to protect our interests, and it’s the law.”

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