



News Release

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Tough alcohol policies keep Mt. Angel's Oktoberfest family friendly

With another successful Oktoberfest put to bed for the season in Mount Angel, festival directors are already planning next year's event. And since beer and wine gardens are part of Oktoberfest's German-style tradition, that preparation includes alcohol control and public safety.

Law enforcement, trained security staff and volunteers, strong alcohol controls and good planning are key ingredients to a winning festival – and a “family-friendly” event. That's especially true in venues where alcohol is served, said Jerry Lauzon, an Oktoberfest director and spokesman.

This year, as in recent years, Oregon State Police, Marion County Sheriff's deputies, Mt Angel Police, officers from nearby cities, security personnel and Oregon Liquor Control Commission inspectors helped ensure safety at the festival grounds and in the community. Thousands of Oregonians attended the four-day event known for its food, drink, Bavarian music, costumes and dancing.

Police made 10 arrests for driving under the influence of intoxicants (DUII) on Mt. Angel area roads, but that number is less than in past years – along with other Oktoberfest alcohol-related problems, said Lauzon.

Oktoberfest Turnaround

A number of years back, Mt. Angel's Oktoberfest had a reputation for late-night rowdiness and out-of control drinking, especially in the beer garden, Lauzon said. But the festival board has worked to turn things around and keep it an event for both young people and adults.

In one key alcohol policy change, 64-ounce buckets and 32-ounce cups of beer were eliminated in favor of 16-ounce cups with a 14-ounce pour. Wine is now served in a seven-ounce cup with a six-ounce pour. Beer taps and wine bars are shut down 30 - 60

minutes before a venue closes to discourage “chug-a-lugging” and over consumption, said Lauzon.

In recent years, the Oktoberfest board instituted additional measures to reduce alcohol-related problems, including:

- ▶ Charging admission to alcohol venues, using tokens, and asking full-market price for beer and wine.
- ▶ Instituting a “two drink at a time from the bar” rule.
- ▶ Increasing alcohol monitors and security at beer and wine gardens. Alcohol monitors are stationed at the head of beer lines. They observe and talk to patrons to help prevent sales to visibly intoxicated persons. There is security at all exits to ensure that no alcohol leaves the venue.
- ▶ Use of a designated driver program in which participants receive free non-alcohol beverages during the evening. Taxis are on hand to provide an alternate safe drive home.
- ▶ Use of up to 60 local and neighboring police officers at key times during the event. Police visibility is increased when the beer garden closes. Public drunkenness, lewd and vulgar behavior are not tolerated during the Oktoberfest.
- ▶ State police and deputies patrol area highways in the evenings to check for DUIIs.

Inspector Steve Berrios, of the Salem OLCC office, said the agency has a “good working relationship” with the Oktoberfest board, security providers, beer and wine wholesalers, and local law enforcement. The OLCC must approve the festival’s temporary alcohol sales license, so that gives Oktoberfest and OLCC staff members time to work out any bugs in the alcohol control plan, he explained. The OLCC also attends a pre-festival meeting with law enforcement and fire officials, wholesalers and others to discuss potential problem areas. Teams of OLCC inspectors patrol the festival grounds and Mt. Angel licensed premises during the event to ensure public safety. Key areas of concern are minors in possession of alcohol (MIP) and visibly intoxicated persons

Lauzon said the festival board keeps abreast of changes in liquor laws and rules and remains in contact with OLCC officials throughout the year. “We work in a cooperative way with the OLCC to improve control at Oktoberfest,” he explained. “We know that the OLCC has helped us in making our festival better.”

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