

Duff on Hospitality Law

Liquor in the Workplace: What Businesses Need to Know

By Greg Duff on 6.19.12 | Posted in Liquor

Alcohol has been making the headlines over the past several weeks in Washington as the state prepares for Initiative 1183 to take effect. And while the privatization of liquor sales remains a popular topic, another alcohol-related headline deserves some notice from business owners. The Seattle Times recently described a questionable situation caught by KOMO News cameras: beer in the temporary offices of Kiewit, the construction firm responsible for some of the work being done on Highway 520. Partially in response to the pending investigation by the Department of Labor and Industry, clients and other readers have been asking whether a business can have alcohol in the workplace without running afoul of liquor regulations.

As a general rule, a business may not serve liquor to its employees or the public without a permit or license. Two options are, however, available to businesses wishing to serve alcohol on a limited basis. A banquet permit covers a single event where liquor is being provided without charge to private invitees, and is practical for businesses that have very infrequent occasions to serve alcohol. For businesses that wish to serve alcohol on a more frequent basis, a Class 4 permit is appropriate. Class 4 permits cost \$500 for one year, and liquor must be served in specified hospitality or dining rooms for not more than 24 hours in a given week. Kiewit, and other businesses, are likely violating these requirements even with a Class 4 permit if alcohol is freely available to employees without area or time restrictions.

Businesses that do not comply with permit and license requirements can be subject to warnings, fines, and administrative violation notices. If you have questions about your business and applicable alcohol regulations, please contact [me](#).

Tags: Banquet Permit, Class 4 Permit, Department of Labor and Industry, Initiative 1183, Kiewit, KOMO, Liquor regulations, The Seattle Times