

Law concerns even BB, paintball guns

■ **WEAPONS:** Residents should know it's illegal to shoot any type of firearm within Eugene city limits

By Brian Womack
Community Reporter

It may not sound like a gun, it may not fire like a gun, but it still may be considered a gun by Eugene police.

That's what some University area residents are learning about firing paint ball and BB guns in city limits. The problem of firing guns illegally has become a common problem with four incidents reported in the last few weeks.

Yet in some cases, perpetrators have pleaded ignorance to the illegal shooting law.

Yu Jin Han, 20, and Ronald Wink-Kai Lam, 21, were cited for violation of a city ordinance Monday when they shot a BB gun from 541 E. 19th St. that resulted in no injuries. According to police reports, the two were unaware that firing a gun in city limits was illegal.

William Shields and Christopher Mattina, both University students, found shooting their BB gun gave them a trip to the Lane County Jail on May 7, said Brian Terrett, spokesman for Eugene public safety. The two were charged with reckless endangerment and unlawful use of a weapon after they shot toward the building at 1414 Alder St. with the BB gun from the second floor of the building at 1390 Alder St.

The pair said they were perplexed at the penalty for the shooting because the weapon was "only a BB gun."

Jan Power, spokeswoman for Eugene public safety, said guns should be treated as guns regardless of what make they are.

"Guns can be fun if they're handled appropriately and if people are educated," she said. "However, the more guns are handled, the more that they will be discharged."

Very dangerous situations can arise when people don't know if they are being shot at by a real

gun or a toy.

Last Wednesday, a tow truck operator at 15th Avenue and Alder Street heard three thumps on his truck that sounded like .22 caliber gunshots.

He later found out the perpetrators were using a paintball gun. His truck was not damaged, but one of the paint balls came near to striking him.

But much more than truck damage could have happened.

Jed Keever, an officer with Eugene public safety, said the tow truck operator would have had the right to return fire.

"Under the circumstances of this incident, the man believed he was shot [at]. ... He is legally justified to defend himself," he said.

Power said these kinds of incidents can be dangerous for officers who have to assume that something that looks like a gun may be a gun.

Officers have come very close to shooting someone who was brandishing a paintball gun, she said.

Retention: Scholarships keep minorities in school

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of programs might benefit Oregon students, said Tamara Dykeman, legislative director of OSL.

Focus groups on Oregon campuses are evaluating a preliminary draft of the state system's survey, Coley said.

After the focus groups have evaluated the survey, the state system will draft a final version and contract a company to administer the survey this fall, he said.

The state system will use the survey to look at how comfortable Oregon's campuses are for the overall student population and for students of color in particular, Coley said.

"The survey is the type of assessment needed to [make sure] the campus is a welcoming environment for everyone," he said.

While the state higher education system prepares to look at campus climate, OSL is looking at how effective retention programs work, said Dykeman.

OSL looked at four retention programs at three universities with good retention records, Dykeman said.

Oregon state institutions have an overall retention rate of about 51 percent, Dykeman said. Further, around a third of all freshmen drop out of school in Oregon universities.

Once the research is completed, Dykeman will present recommendations to the OSL board, and the board will choose one recommendation to act on, she said.

For example, a statewide scholarship program was created in 1987 to increase minority enrollment, Coley said.

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