

Parties

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commit two of the following violations: breaking laws related to alcohol such as minors possessing alcohol, assault, menacing, harassment, public urination or defecation, littering, the use of illegal fireworks, or using legal fireworks outside of the permitted times of Dec. 31 to Jan. 1, and June 23 to July 6. On the weekend of May 14, four party hosts were cited for an unruly gathering, which carries a base fine of \$375. Along with tenants, the property owners can be fined if there are multiple violations of the ordinance. So far, no property owners have been cited, but at least two have been sent letters because their tenants violated the unruly gathering ordinance or came close, according to Lt. Billy Halvorson.

Since 2013 there have been at least 28 incidents where hosts were cited for unruly gatherings. The years of 2013 and 2016 saw the most citations, with seven each, according to McLaughlin. At least six have been cited with the ordinance so far in 2022, with two from the May 7 Ferry Street party and four the following weekend, according to Lt. Doug Mozan.

The alleged behavior has also gotten the attention of the property owners whose tenants are throwing the parties.

Adam Schulz, an attorney representing the owners of a house at the corner of 19th Avenue and Hilyard Street where tenants were given citations for prohibited noise the past two weekends, called the alleged behavior at recent parties "wholly unacceptable." He said the alleged behavior appeared to break the lease agreement.

"Community safety and respect are the most important thing to my client," Schulz said.

Schulz did not say whether tenants could be evicted because of the behavior, but he said it is a process, and that the owner, listed as Tracktown Holdings LLC, is considering options and is talking with the UO, the tenants and Eugene Police Department to determine the next steps.

Attempts to reach the house's tenants for comment were unsuccessful.

Darren Stone, a co-owner of the Jennings Group that manages student housing, said its tenants can have their leases terminated if they violate the prohibited noise ordinance twice in a six-month period, noting tenants are sent a written notice after the first violation. He said the Jennings Group has not had houses that are part of the recent conflicts, but he said Jennings has terminated leases in the past following parties.

"It's the neighborhood we're trying to protect and do right by when we give termination letters to tenants who are behaving badly," Stone said.

The office of William Syrios, an owner of the Ferry Street party house, declined to comment on the subject.

'The kids haven't calmed down, they just found another house'

Non-student neighbors to the parties say the noise has been unbearable, with crowds of hundreds keeping them up until early hours of the mornings and leaving the streets covered in broken glass and trash.

Misty Nored, 46, who lives with her 67-year-old mother Brenda Keener a block away from the Ferry Street Mother's Day party, said May 19 that house has been quiet since the police response. However, the night of May 18 she was kept up until 4 a.m. with students gathering in her front yard.

"It was a nightmare," Nored said, pointing to the footprints in her garden where she said people were running through. "The kids haven't calmed down, they just found another house, I think." The mother and daughter said there has been an increase in police officers, but both were skeptical it would make a noticeable change in partying behavior, or the drunk students congregating and urinating in her front yard.

"They can party inside their own houses. They don't have to use my front yard," Keener said. "Quit peeing in my bushes."

'Response is out of control and totally excessive'

Some students, however, say officers are going too far and ticketing compliant students who shouldn't be the focus.

UO junior Eric Wasserman, 21, went to the front of his house at about 10:40 p.m. May 14 to check on the police responding to a noise complaint about a 20-person birthday party in his backyard, and said he was shocked to count



The neighborhood west of the University of Oregon on E. 16th Ave. where a large party occurred in April that spilled into the street. CHRIS PIETSCH/THE REGISTER-GUARD

seven Eugene police cars and a prisoner transport van that responded. "That response is out of control and totally excessive," Wasserman told The Register-Guard.

Wasserman and his roommates were given \$375 citations for excessive noise, he said. Wasserman said it came off as punishing all students for the bad behavior by a few.

"You can't treat every student as a criminal because of the actions a few students took in prior weeks," he said.

Wasserman wrote in an email to The Register-Guard and other media outlets that he plans to fight the citation in court. He said the parties turned down the volume on their portable speaker prior to 10 p.m. to align with the city's noise ordinance. It states it's a violation if the sound is "plainly audible" from inside other dwelling units between 10 p.m. and 7 a.m.

Davis Bruton, another 21-year-old junior at UO who was at the Ferry Street Mother's Day party, said he thinks officers have been instigating conflicts with students at parties, and more so than before the pandemic.

"It's like, why are you guys coming to a house and pushing moms away, telling them 'If you don't stop talking, I'm going to take you in, too?'" Bruton said.

'When I see their parents with them, it hits different'

Bruton and Wasserman questioned Eugene Police Department's decision to increase the amount of resources dedicated to party response instead of using the resources for more serious crimes or issues like addressing homelessness. While walking through the West University area May 13, Bruton said he saw numerous groups of students being cited for open containers and minors possessing alcohol.

"It was just absurd, like almost every corner there were flashing lights and kids sitting on the ground getting written up," Bruton said. "It feels like freshman year and like, the RAs are walking around the halls trying to write people up for having alcohol."

Gillian Zekos, a 38-year-old who lives on 19th Avenue near a party house at the intersection of Hilyard Street, felt differently about the open container enforcement.

She said it has bothered her in the past to see students with open containers walking past the university's police station — sometimes with parents — without getting ticketed. Zekos said it evoked a sense of privilege she believes students have.

"When I see their parents with them, it hits different," she said. "It's like, 'What makes you think that's OK?'"

Zekos, who recently graduated from UO, thinks the Hilyard Street party house noise nearby hasn't been any worse lately than it has been in the past. But the noise still bothers Zekos, to the point she often has to turn her own stereo up to drown it out.

'We have to say enough's enough'

lem, Stayton, Turner, Gates and Albany. The EPA said the spill did not impact drinking water.

Space Age started cleanup activities including soil excavation, pumping and water quality monitoring on the day of the spill.

Statesman Journal reporter Zach Urness contributed to this report.

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"calibrating expectations" of students throwing and attending parties to not disturb the neighborhood.

"Not every college town has parties devolve into riots or major public disorder problems," he said.

The increased off-campus police presence is expected to last through the rest of the school year, Mozan said.

UO trying to 'better understand the issue'

Following the first two weekends Eugene Police Department issued press releases about the parties, staff at UO participated in ride-alongs to "better understand the issue," according to Kay Jarvis, the school's director of public affairs issues management.

"We understand and share the community's concern regarding parties associated with college-aged individuals, some of whom are associated with the university," Jarvis said.

Other steps included "educational outreach" to student groups about unruly parties, and the school's Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards following up directly with students who were cited, Jarvis said.

Jarvis noted that the parties are happening off-campus and therefore are outside of the University of Oregon Police Department's jurisdiction, and that staff and university police are partnering with Eugene police and plan to visit tenants at houses with repeat citations for noise complaints.

Halvorson said the university has informed Eugene police that on May 20 university police, the office of student conduct and neighbor relations went to some party houses to have conversations about behavior and party management. If the school's staff determine a student violated UO's code of conduct, it could lead to "educational sanctions, disciplinary probation or suspension depending on the egregiousness" of the behavior.

The university declined to say whether any students had been disciplined due to the recent parties, citing privacy laws.

Mozan did not directly answer when asked if he puts any culpability on the university, but he confirmed the school's dean of students was on a ride-along and said the university was "very interested" in the increased police presence and observing party behavior.

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Eugene Lt. Doug Mozan met with reporters outside police headquarters May 15 to discuss the tensions between police and parties, and said the department hopes more strict enforcement will adjust the parties' behavior and keep it from escalating.

"Our game is always trying to get voluntary compliance, but at some point we have to say enough's enough," Mozan said.

The alleged violent behavior against police, including punching an officer and throwing bottles at others, was one reason the department decided to ramp up its enforcement, according to Mozan. When officers get hurt during a response, "they're interested in doubling down on public safety," Mozan said.

In nearly 30 years as an officer, Mozan said, there have been stretches where police never got involved with parties and they didn't cause problems for neighbors. He said it's a matter of



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Place Matters

Spill

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II, 2020 and a sheen was visible on the river for over three months.

The river is home to species of salmon, which are listed on the Endangered Species Act.

The water from the river is used for drinking water for cities including Sa-