

SERRA DISPENSARY CLOSING

Marijuana business gave Eugene-based employees one week's notice

Serra, a cannabis dispensary in Eugene, will permanently close its doors here on Thurs., Dec. 21. The dispensary, which markets itself as selling “quality drugs,” notified its Eugene staff of the decision on Dec. 14.

A staff member, who did not want to use their name for fear of retaliation, says the announcement was “a shocker.”

The employee says other employees have approved paid time off, but because the store is closing, there is concern that employees will not be paid for their vacation time. According to the employee, Groundworks Services Inc., the parent company that owns Serra, was still enrolling new employees in its health insurance plan in November. The company continues to operate two dispensaries in Portland.

According to Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industries (BOLI) Communications Director Charlie Burr, if a company goes out of business and doesn't pay its workers, BOLI would investigate the claim and pay workers out of the state's Wages Security Fund.

But in order to investigate owed wages, Burr says, “workers would have to step forward and claim unpaid wages.”

A Groundworks corporate employee, who asked not to be identified, called *Eugene Weekly* in response to a request for comment on the Eugene Serra location's closing and pointed to a statement on the company's website. She says former employees are eligible to sign up for health care because the loss of employment is a “life-status change — an allowed qualified event by law, so that wouldn't affect them.”

According to the “about” section of the company's website, “Serra is an experiential cannabis lifestyle brand and curated retail space that rethinks, redefines, and sets the bar for progressive pot culture.” The company has been posting Instagram photos of its Portland location since quietly announcing to employees the closure here.

Serra's official statement offers no explanation of the Eugene location's closing, but thanks employees and states that it “will continue to maintain sales and service within Portland.”

The Eugene Serra employee says Groundworks sent a few lists of employment resources from the state and county as well as job openings with their company in Portland, “which is pretty unrealistic considering it's the end of the month. It's the holiday season, we all live in Eugene; it's not like it's that easy. The cost of living in Portland is higher. We already get a very low hourly wage; it's not a really comparable or realistic offer from a company that is so large and has an insane amount of money.”

On May 26, two former Groundworks employees filed complaints with BOLI claiming they had been fired in retaliation for reporting what they believed to be violations of Oregon Liquor Control Commission marijuana regulations.

Both complaints have been withdrawn and moved to civil court, according to Burr.

The complaint alleges Groundworks didn't account for approximately “1,000 grams of ‘shake.’” Furthermore, a supervisor allegedly wanted to add the shake, a term for the detritus that breaks off a marijuana bud, “to other batches” for testing.

OLCC rules, however, do not allow marijuana batches from different harvests to be mixed, according to the complaint.

When the two employees decided to investigate the weights of bags being tested after brining up their concerns to management, management allowed the mixing of batches to occur, the complaint alleges.

The two employees sent an email notifying the Groundworks COO and management of the mixing. Two days later, one employee was fired without notice. The other employee, who was out sick for the day, came in to ask questions about the other employee and was told that she would not be fired. However, according to the complaint, the second employee was terminated by email three days later. ■



PHOTO BY CORINNE BOYER

GIVE THE GIFT OF COMFORT



FOOTWISE

Downtown Eugene • 181 E Broadway • 541.342.6107
Footwise.com • Mon-Sat 10-6 & Sun 11-5



Our #GoodLifeGoal:
consolidate our lives



Now that we're a family, it's important our finances are also under one roof. SELCO makes it possible with a full range of services — from everyday banking and loans to insurance and investing. It's our trusted financial home.

selco.org • 800-445-4483 • Branches throughout Eugene and Springfield
Banking | Mortgages | Insurance | Investments | Business Lending



Membership requirements apply. See SELCO for details. NMLS#402847