



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

Fred Meyer in Warrenton is among the Kroger stores that will raise the age to purchase guns to 21.

## Kroger raises age for gun purchases at Fred Meyer

Buyers now must be 21

By ERICKA CRUZ GUEVARA  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

Kroger, the company that operates Fred Meyer stores in Oregon, Washington state, Alaska and Idaho, is increasing the minimum age for firearm and ammunition purchases from 18 to 21 at all its Fred Meyer locations that sell firearms.

"We believe these are common-sense steps we can take immediately that are in line with our values and our vision," Kroger said in a statement.

Kroger joins large-scale retailers Walmart and Dick's Sporting Goods, which both announced that they would stop selling guns to customers under 21 and would impose new restrictions on ammunition sales.

The move by the retailers follows the shooting at a Parkland, Florida, high school in February that left 17 people dead and several others wounded.

Kroger operates 50 Fred Meyer stores in Oregon. Seventeen of those locations sell firearms, including the store in Warrenton. None of the company's Portland stores sell firearms.

"Kroger's vision is to

serve America through food inspiration and uplift. In response to the tragic events in Parkland and elsewhere, we've taken a hard look at our policies and procedures for firearm sales," Kroger said in a statement.

"We have a thorough and vigilant background check process for the sale of sporting-related firearms at our select general-merchandise Fred Meyer stores. In addition, firearms are sold only by designated associates that go through rigorous training and federal background checks. Recent events demonstrate the need for additional action on the part of responsible gun retailers."

Kroger said it stopped selling military-style semi-automatic rifles at its Fred Meyer stores several years ago, but that it will no longer accept special orders of such weapons in Alaska.

"As we refresh stores we are often transitioning gun departments due to softer demand and changing customer preferences," the company added.

On Thursday, Dick's Sporting Goods announced that, along with new age restrictions, it would stop selling military-style semi-automatic rifles and high-capacity magazines.

Walmart said it would remove items resembling assault-style rifles from its website.

## County enters agreement for disaster shelters

By JACK HEFFERNAN  
The Daily Astorian

Clatsop County commissioners approved an agreement Wednesday with a private company that will facilitate mass shelters in the event of a disaster such as the Cascadia Subduction Zone earthquake and tsunami.

The agreement with GFP Enterprises details how the company would respond to a pre-designated mass shelter site, such as Camp Rilea, and set up a shelter for people who are unable to live in their homes for a prolonged period of time. The company would also provide services like food, water, showers and laundry. The Sisters-based company has responded to disasters such as Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Isaac.

"By the time you activate this contract, you're going to

want us there yesterday. That's just the way it is," said Donald R. Pollard, the company's chief operating officer. "There's no water. There's no power. Sewer systems aren't working. We bring all of that."

Before approving the agreement unanimously, Commissioner Lianne Thompson expressed concerns over the potential costs. The county will not pay any money until a catastrophic disaster strikes and the company's services are needed. If a disaster occurs, quotes from

the company for a 1,000-person shelter, for instance, include nearly \$70,000 for construction and deconstruction and more than \$875,000 in operations costs per week.

While the county could request help through state and federal partners during a catastrophe, it would improve effectiveness and timeliness dramatically to have an agreement already in place, Emergency Service Manager Tiffany Brown said. It would also allow the county to incorporate

the company in its plans for a large-scale disaster.

"The disaster is going to be expensive," Brown said.

In other business Wednesday night, commissioners:

- Unanimously passed a resolution to work cooperatively toward the cleanup of an oil spill near the Cannery Pier Hotel. The hotel owned the tank that leaked the oil, though management says it had no previous knowledge of its existence.

- The Port of Astoria and Astoria City Council passed similar resolutions, and none of them make any financial commitments.

- Approved a budget adjustment allowing the Fair & Expo to use \$100,000 of its contingency money over the next four months. The fair had used nearly all of its maintenance and services budget — roughly \$438,000 — in the first half of fiscal year.

## DA finds no criminal wrongdoing in Camp Rilea death

By JACK HEFFERNAN  
The Daily Astorian

The Clatsop County District Attorney's Office will not file criminal charges in the accidental shooting death of a soldier at Camp Rilea in January.

Spc. Devin Kuhn, a 24-year-old soldier based at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington state, died at Columbia Memorial Hospital from a gunshot wound. An investigation found that a soldier was practicing loading his weapon in one of the barracks

before it discharged and struck Kuhn, District Attorney Josh Marquis said.

"There is no indication that this was anything but a tragic accident," Marquis said in a statement. "Any negligence did not rise to the level of criminal culpability and, accordingly,

the investigation is closed."

The Army Criminal Investigation Command has yet to announce the results of its investigation.

Camp Rilea, located in Warrenton, is the Oregon National Guard's largest training facility.

## Lawsuit seeks greater protections for rare Northwest bird

By JES BURNS  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

An environmental group is suing the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to increase protections for a small ground-nesting bird called the streaked horned lark.

The lark once ranged from the grasslands of southern Oregon north into Canada, but now can only be found in the Willamette Valley and Puget Sound region. It was listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act in 2013.

The Center for Biological Diversity is suing to raise the bird's status to "endangered." They are also trying to get rid of an exemption for farmers and airports that threaten the lark's nesting habitat.

"So it can handle some disturbance, but what it can't handle is having its nests run over,

plowed over, mowed over during the spring — during the short breeding season," said Noah Greenwald, the center's endangered species director.

Nests could be protected by locating and avoiding them during mowing, something that would take time and resources to accomplish.

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