



News Release

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OLCC Provides Phase 1 Guidance to Alcohol Licensees Adjusts Bottle Bill Compliance to State's Phase-In Plan

Conditions for Licensees to Reopen Connects with OHA Public Health Directives
Return to Container Redemption Based on Providing Flexibility to Grocers
Requirements for Licensees in Baseline Communities Also Reinforced

PORTLAND, OR. – Today, the Oregon Liquor Control Commission is providing specific guidance for its alcohol licensees operating bars and restaurants in counties approved by Governor Brown for Oregon's Phase 1 reopening. The OLCC is also informing Oregon grocery retailers about the shift in beverage container redemption compliance for Oregon's Bottle Bill, which will now be tied to whether or not a county has moved into Phase 1 or remains in the baseline category.

The [OLCC's direction to alcohol licensees](#) focuses on connecting with guidance for physical distancing and the promotion of [public health directives for bars, restaurants and other establishments serving alcohol](#), from the Oregon Health Authority.

The OLCC is allowing alcohol licensees greater flexibility in creating more usable customer space because OHA social distancing guidelines require bars and restaurants to provide more physical space between patrons. OLCC licensees may customize existing space, normally off-limits to minors, if in making the adjustment the primary use of the space is to serve food. Licensees are also allowed to expand into additional indoor areas or onto sidewalks, parking lots, or streets with the permission of the property owner or local government.

Only businesses with a current OLCC license may sell and serve alcohol for drinking on or off the licensed establishment. A bar or restaurant with a liquor liability insurance (LLI) requirement must have current LLI that meets minimum coverage requirements prior to re-starting the sale or service of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption. [Earlier the OLCC announced](#) it would not take compliance action against licensees that allowed their LLI coverage to lapse and then restarted it.

Restaurant and bar licensees in [baseline phase counties](#) will need to maintain the status quo as reflected in the [Governor's Executive Order 20-25](#), which includes a ban on the sale and consumption of alcohol at food establishments. However, bars and restaurants in baseline phase areas can continue to provide curbside delivery of beer, wine and cider, or deliver to customers' homes.

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May 15, 2020
OLCC Reopening Phase 1

On March 15, 2020, in an effort to allow stores to appropriately manage the COVID-19 crisis, OLCC suspended enforcing the requirement for retailers to accept empty beverage container returns for refunds as required by the Oregon Bottle Bill. The previous notice of non-enforcement was set to end on May 31. However, moving forward, the OLCC will link non-compliance enforcement to the Governor's Phased Reopening plan. This notice replaces the previous notice.

Phase I has been announced for [reopening counties](#), so OLCC will re-start its compliance enforcement in these areas after May 29th. No later than two weeks after a county enters Phase 1, retailers in the county will be required to resume accepting empty beverage containers from customers, both through their reverse vending machines and by hand count. (For example: *counties entering Phase 1 on May 15 will have two weeks to become compliant by May 29.*)

For counties that remain in the [baseline phase](#), the OLCC will continue to suspend enforcement requiring retailers to accept empty container returns, until the county progresses to Phase 1. If a county reverses direction from Phase 1 to the baseline phase, the OLCC then will re-suspend enforcement for retailers declining to accept beverage container returns until the county re-enters Phase 1.

For retailers required to resume accepting redeemable beverage containers, the number of empty containers retailers are required to accept remains the same as prior to the COVID-19 non-enforcement period, [either 24, 50, or 144](#).

Our industry partners, including [Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative](#) and [Northwest Grocers Association](#), are working on plans to accommodate returns while maintaining physical distancing and other requirements to ensure the safety of customers and store personnel. The OLCC also advises customers that due to social distancing and high demand during Phase 1 reopening, retailers may not be able to accommodate all individuals who wish to return containers in a given day.

"Bottle redemption in Oregon requires a close collaboration between private retailers, beverage container recyclers and the OLCC, that has limited enforcement responsibilities," said Steve Marks, OLCC Executive Director. "The OLCC appreciates the leadership provided by the Northwest Grocers Association and the Oregon Beverage Recycling Cooperative in designing an orderly process to safely resume the service of beverage container redemption in Oregon under the Phase I reopening of Oregon."

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