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Area businesses, stores ban concealed weapons despite licenses

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Little white signs displaying a crossed-out handgun have been cropping up around Manhattan since last month following the state's adoption of concealed-carry laws. The signs render the properties off-limits to concealed weapons.

The Personal and Family Protection Act, which became law on July 1, 2006, allows for the licensed carrying of concealed weapons but not everywhere.

The first licenses were issued on Jan. 3, 2007. To obtain a license, one can fill out an online application at the Kansas attorney general's Web site, or pick up a paper copy at the sheriff's office in the county where he or she resides.

The licenses are valid for four years, and all license applicants successfully must complete an 8-hour training program approved by the attorney general before receiving the license. The license costs \$150 and the cost of instruction, with \$40 going to that sheriff's office and the rest to the attorney general's office.

A list of certified instructors is on the Attorney General's Web site.

The act lists several locations where concealed weapons are banned, including city halls, municipal courts and college campuses.

"It's really just a safety issue," said Clancy Holeman, Riley County counselor.

Property owners are allowed to ban concealed weapons on their property by posting signs that meet standards set by the act. The city commission voted last month to put such signs on much of its property, including City Hall and several parks.

Many businesses and organizations in and around Manhattan have put up such signs, including the Riley County Police Department, Manhattan Town Center and the Riley County Historical Museum.

The signs must be eight inches square or larger, with a white background. The depiction of the handgun must be black and the circle and diagonal slash across the image of the handgun should be red.

No text can be placed within the one-inch area surrounding the graphic, according to the regulations.

Sara Van Allen, marketing manager for Manhattan Town Center, said the building is a family environment, and as such, the owners decided to ban concealed weapons in the entire mall.

"It's for the safety of our shoppers," Van Allen said.

If a person is caught carrying a concealed weapon in a building that has a posted weapons ban, police will charge him or her with a class-B misdemeanor which means a fine of \$200 to \$1,000 and no more than six months imprisonment.

Many businesses do not have the signs up, but some said the signs might be a good idea, especially businesses with a high risk of robberies, said Kelly Unekis, clerk at Dara's Fast Lane.

"It'd probably be a good idea since the law passed," Unekis said.

Rep. Sydney Carlin, D-Manhattan, didn't vote for the concealed carry law but did vote to restrict areas in which concealed weapons could be taken, she said.

House Bill 2528, introduced Wednesday, would prohibit places that have not been specified by state law from banning concealed weapons, Carlin said.

She was unsure whether retail businesses such as Manhattan Town Center would fall under that bill.

"I don't intend to support anything more on concealed carry," Carlin said.

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