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### **Castro Valley retailer to lose liquor license over sales to minors**

By Kristofer Noceda

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CASTRO VALLEY — A convenience store will lose its liquor license after repeatedly selling liquor to minors, Alcoholic Beverage Control officials said.

The am/pm store at the Arco gas station at 2770 Castro Valley Blvd. was slapped with a \$1,500 fine last week and is serving a 20-day suspension, set to end Feb. 16. The store is temporarily shuttered and may be preparing for change in ownership.

The suspension follows a recent court ruling after the store owner challenged the August 2008 incident in which an employee was caught selling alcohol to a minor.

It was the third such incident. Employees also were caught selling to minors in April and October of 2007, Alameda County Sheriff's Office Deputy Paul Liskey said.

In addition, the store has a case pending for a similar incident reported in July.

Because the store has been cited in at least three incidents, ABC officials have given the owner six months to sell its license before it is revoked, spokesman John Carr said.

If the store is caught selling to minors during the half-year probation period, the license will be terminated.

"Either way, they are not going to be operating at that location six months from now," Carr said.

Still, some community members said ABC's ruling will not solve the problem.

"Arco has violated the law on several occasions with sales to minors, and the fact that ABC is suggesting that they transfer the license is absurd,"

said Traci Cross, Castro Valley Community Action Network director.

"ABC should be penalizing them and not allowing them to sell alcohol in their establishment. "... They will start over with a clean slate and if they do it again, all they have do to is sell the license. What is wrong with our laws?"

Owners of the store could not be reached for comment. Public records show the alcohol license was issued in 2002 to Zinnia Kals Kohli of Starting Point LLC.

On Thursday, the gas station and convenience store were closed, and a suspension notice was on the front door. A public notice of application for ownership change was posted on a store window.

Am/pm corporate officials contacted would not comment because the Arco locations are franchised.

Castro Valley is no stranger to businesses selling alcohol to minors.

Last year, the Safeway at Redwood Road and Castro Valley Boulevard served a 45-day license suspension after failing a series of minor decoy operations the ABC co-sponsored with the sheriff's office.

In a span of two years, the supermarket sold alcohol to minors in operations conducted in March and April 2007 and in August and October 2008.

Safeway officials since have worked with community groups and the Castro Valley Municipal Advisory Council on curbing the problem by enforcing new store policies.

The sheriff's office sent minors to buy alcohol at 68 businesses last year and issued eight citations where youths were able to purchase liquor.

In 2009, officials cited nine locations after conducting operations at 26 businesses.

Kristofer Noceda covers Cal State East Bay, Chabot College, Castro Valley, San Lorenzo and other unincorporated communities in the greater Hayward area. Contact him at 510-293-2479. Follow him at [Twitter.com/Noceda\\_Reports](https://twitter.com/Noceda_Reports).