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New rules affect gatherings, food permits

By DI LEWIS

Standard-Examiner staff dlewis@standard.net

OGDEN — An increase in people applying for temporary gathering, mass gathering and temporary food permits led to an information session Thursday at the Weber/Morgan Health Department.

Department director Gary House said the meeting was held to inform organizers and food handlers of some recent changes in the permit process and to make them aware of the rules involved in holding temporary gatherings, such as fairs and festivals.

In 2008, the health department issued 29 mass-gathering permits and 113 temporary event permits, an increase from 10 mass gatherings and six events in 2007. Temporary foodhandling permits are \$35.

Sherrie Waters, environmental health scientist, said any group of 500 or more people that gathers for more than two hours must get a temporary massgathering permit and have available things like water, first aid and rest rooms.

Kelly Hall, environmental health scientist, emphasized that with the increase in temporary food permit applications, the department was being overwhelmed by last-minute requests.

A graduated late-application fee was added for those who do not turn in the application before the deadline. People who apply five or fewer days before the event will pay an additional 25 percent per day, she said.

For any event that has been advertised or is open to the public — from church bazaars to fair vendors — those selling food must have a permit, she said.

Hall said that in the past, department employees have had to close some food booths down for not having a permit. Either they were new to having a food booth and didn't know the rules, she said, or they chose to ignore them.

Larry McBride, chairman of the Ogden Valley Balloon Festival, said it was helpful to attend the meeting.

"It was interesting to me as an organizer," he said. "I didn't quite appreciate the problems the vendors go through."