

City closes shooting range for 'safety' reasons

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By LARRY PHILLIPS

• Leader & Times

The City of Liberal, which according to a recorded deed in 1994, doesn't own the shooting range, but has closed the range to the public – again.

The land is owned by Seward County, but the city now operates the range.

Recently, the City of Liberal has attempted to open the range to other groups besides the Liberal Gun Club, but those changes have raised questions about insurance for the facility.

A faxed press release from the City of Liberal received by the Leader & Times at 3:15 p.m.

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Monday stated, "The City of Liberal has received new information from the EMC Insurance which has raised a concern about public safety. The City of Liberal shooting range is closed until further notice in the interest of public safety to provide City Administration and City Commission an opportunity to fully review all new information and look for ways to make the range safer."

It also noted that "The review is expected to be completed within the next several weeks," and ended with, "No further information will be released until City Administration and City Commission have completed their review."

The range had been closed by the city last fall after deciding to take control, maintenance and supervision from the Liberal Gun Club. In November, the city issued a statement: "Effective Friday, Nov. 15, the shooting range will be open from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Sunday."

Although the "safety" issue was not identified, the EMC Insurance reference appeared to indicate a liability coverage issue.

Shortly after the Kansas Legislature passed the Personal and Family Protection Act, Kansas HB 2052, allowing concealed carry in public buildings last summer, EMC Insurance Companies stepped into the limelight and made statewide news.

EMC, which provides liability insurance to about 90 percent of Kansas school districts, and numerous municipalities and counties accross the state, has gone on public record warning its agents that schools permitting employees to carry concealed handguns would be declined coverage.

Since no official of the city will explain the exact connection with EMC and the shooting range and "safety concerns," questions remain about whether or not the range is insured.

According to its own release, the city will not provide any further information.

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