

By MaryBeth Matzek

# Under the gun

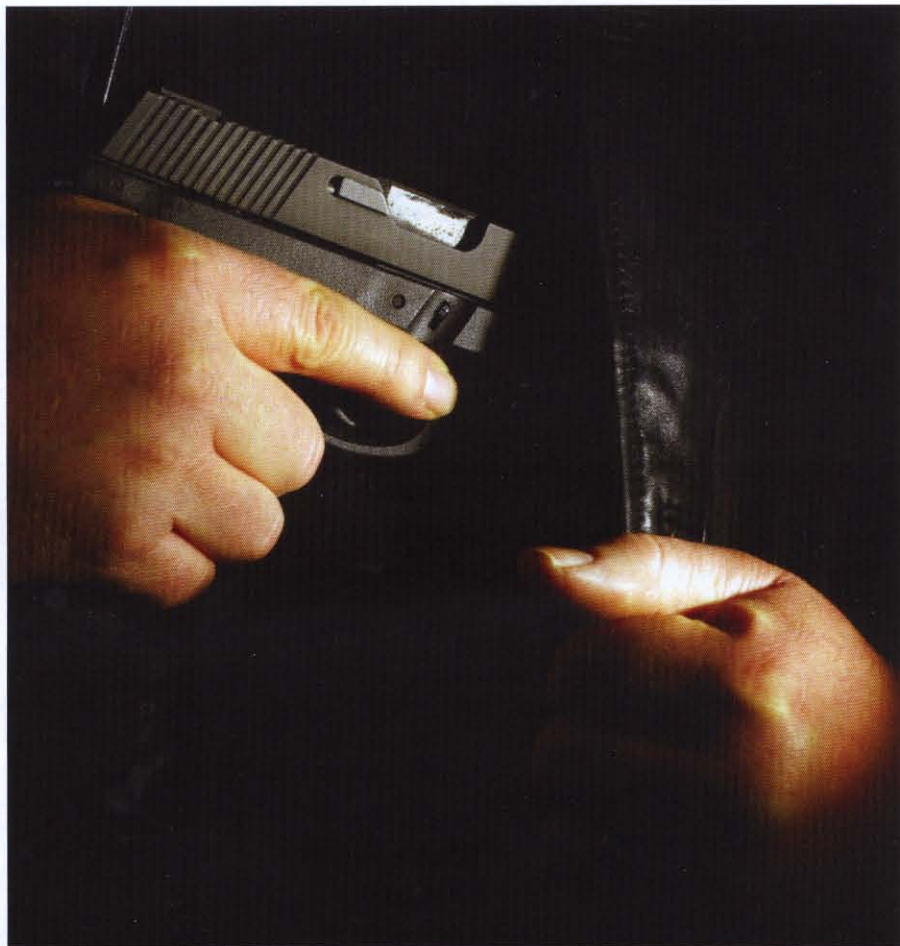
**New concealed carry law has businesses weighing weapons ban**

A new state law is catching many businesses – especially small ones – off-guard. On Nov. 1, Wisconsin's concealed weapons law went into effect, allowing individuals who passed a training course and cleared a background check to carry weapons with them at all times without breaking the law.

While the law does allow private businesses – as well as the state and municipalities – the right to ban concealed weapons from their properties, there are several rules businesses and organizations need to follow, says Bruce Deadman, an attorney with Davis & Kuelthau in Green Bay. For example, if a business decides to ban concealed weapons, it must post a sign clearly stating that. Businesses then also need to make sure they have policies in the event the rule is violated.

“There's a lot people need to think about regarding concealed carry. First, is posting a sign going to discourage someone bent on illegal activity? And what about the statutory immunity if an accident occurs?” he says. “No one really knows the answer to that question yet.”

Susan Finco, president of Leonard & Finco Public Relations in Green Bay, says businesses need to think carefully about any policies they put into place. “You need to be reasonable and do what's best for your business, customers and employees,” she says. “I wouldn't advise anyone to rush into a decision



until they learn more about it.”

Two large New North employers – ThedaCare health system in Appleton and Affinity Health System of Menasha – teamed up to formulate and enforce a similar policy that keeps concealed weapons off their properties across the Fox Cities. Visitors to an Affinity or ThedaCare clinic or hospital will now see signs clearly stating no weapons are allowed inside.

“We want to ensure that ThedaCare

maintains a workplace safe and free of violence for all employees, our patients and our visitors,” said Scott Decker, ThedaCare vice president of quality. “To minimize confusion in our communities, it made logical sense for ThedaCare and Affinity to collaborate on common signage and policies. Doing so should lessen the confusion for patients, visitors and staff at any of our health care facilities.”

Some employers don't have a choice.

## CLOSER LOOK

When the state's new concealed carry law went into effect on Nov. 1, Wisconsin became the 49th state to have the policy on the books. According to the new law, people over the age of 21 who complete a training course and clear a background check will be issued a permit allowing them to carry concealed weapons. The new law does allow private businesses, the state and municipalities the right to ban concealed weapons from their properties even if the gun owner has a permit, as long as it is properly posted. Wisconsin law banning guns in schools, on school grounds and 1,000 feet beyond school grounds is not affected by the new law. To read some questions and answers about the new law, go to [www.doj.state.wi.us/](http://www.doj.state.wi.us/)

If a business serves alcohol, patrons need to keep in mind they can't carry a concealed weapon while imbibing alcohol. "That's a bit of an issue too – what are establishments going to do if they suspect someone with a concealed weapon drinking? And since it's part of the law, they don't need to have a posted sign, but maybe they should put one up anyway, since this is a new law and a lot of people don't understand it yet," Deadman says.

Melissa Bowman, Leonard & Finco's operations manager, has attended several seminars and workshops on the topic and looked through information she's received from the Society for Human Resource Management to gather as much information as possible as she tries to formulate a policy for her employer.

"You would think the law is pretty black and white, but it's not. For example, you can't restrict a permit holder from carrying a weapon in their vehicle during business hours and all of the legal ramifications from whatever you decide," she says.

When deciding on a concealed weapons policy, Deadman says businesses need to do a cost-benefit analysis. For example, they need to take a look at their customers and try

to gauge their reaction to a policy. For example, will patrons care if a retailer bans concealed weapons or will they be offended and then shop somewhere else?

"It's much more than putting up a new sign. Businesses also need to have policies in place about what they will do if someone is in violation," Deadman says.

Before Nov. 1, Wisconsin and Illinois were the only two states in the country without a concealed carry law. Deadman says the state can learn a lot by looking to other states and how the law was implemented and the response.

"Education and understanding about what the law is will be key to making the concealed carry law a success in Wisconsin," he says. ①

# Appleton

*'works for me!'*



Time Warner Cable  
Southpoint Commerce Park

- Easy access to/from Hwy 441
- Immediate access to shopping, dining, professional services, housing and more
- Wide variety of lot sizes to meet your needs

**Over 100 acres of shovel-ready lots are available in this 360-acre park. Call and find out how Appleton can 'work for you'!**

**920-832-6468**  
**[www.appleton.org](http://www.appleton.org)**