

Embattled Midway BP owner fighting to stay open as city cites danger

Citing various violations including failure to cooperate with police, inspectors recommend revoking the gas and tobacco licenses of the St. Paul station.

Author: Lou Raguse

Published: 10:56 PM CDT October 6, 2019

Updated: 2:45 AM CDT October 7, 2019

ST PAUL, Minn. — Trouble seems to have a way of finding the Midway BP Gas Station on University and Hamline in St. Paul.

But owner Khal Aloul says the trouble is not the fault of the business, and it's not accurate to call his store a magnet for crime.

"It's not accurate. Crime can happen anywhere. It's not the place," Aloul said.

<div class="ad__nojs-placeholder" style="height:90px;border:2px solid #e6e6e6"></div>

St. Paul city inspectors want the BP shut down, listing numerous violations in a 58-page report, and calling the business "a serious danger."

The violations range from selling cigarettes to minors, to selling what the city inspector says are "drug kits."

Aloul says the glass pipes St. Paul police say are being used for smoking crack are incense burners.

"It's not a drug kit. What's a drug kit? Anything can be a drug kit you know," Aloul said.

The city also accuses BP workers of refusing to share surveillance video with police, something their business licenses require.

An officer writes that every time she called to ask for video, the worker hung up.

"No this is not true. We gave them about 120 surveillance images the last two months," Aloul said.

Then, in June, a man standing next to the gas pump was shot and killed. Aloul says the victim was followed there by the killer, and the business had nothing to do with it.

"Closing the business is not the solution. Drug dealers going to come here, you close the business, then they're going to move to a different. They're not going disappear from town. Then you're going to go and close the other business?" Aloul said.



Aloul says he wants to help, already spending \$80,000 on plans to demolish and rebuild the station with a car wash and bakery in what would be a \$1.8 million dollar investment.

"And let's work together to make this place safe for the neighbors. For the customers," Aloul said.

The store owner and city officials will plead their cases to a judge on November 13. The St. Paul City Council will base its decision on the judge's recommendation.

