

**DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL**

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November 20, 2006  
PR 06-116

## **ABC Cites 11 for Selling Alcohol to a Minor**

**La Mesa** – On November 18, 2006, officers from the Law Enforcement Task Force on Youth Access to Alcohol conducted an operation in East San Diego County targeting persons that provide alcohol to minors. In all, 11 persons were issued citations for Selling or Furnishing Alcohol to Minors.

Investigators of the California Department Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC), Officers from the San Diego Police Department, the La Mesa Police Department, and Deputies from the San Diego Sheriff's Department conducted Minor Decoy and Shoulder Tap Operations in the Cities of La Mesa and Lemon Grove as well as in the unincorporated areas of Alpine and Spring Valley.

During the Minor Decoy Operations, decoys visited 59 off-sale locations and purchased alcohol at 8 of those premises. Decoys also visited 3 on-sale locations and purchased alcohol at 1 location.

Decoys also solicited 9 persons during the Shoulder Tap operation. Of those 9 persons solicited, 2 furnished alcohol to the minors.

Those who sold to the minors face a minimum fine of \$250, and/or 24 to 32 hours of community service for a first violation. Those who furnished alcohol to a minor face a fine of \$1,000 and/or community service and potentially 6 months in jail. Additionally, the Department will take administrative action against the ABC licensees that furnished alcoholic beverages to the minor decoys. That may include a fine, a suspension of the liquor license, or the permanent revocation of the license.

During these operations, the minors must be under the age of 20, must have the appearance of a minor, cannot wear clothes or jewelry that would make them look older, and must answer truthfully if asked their age.

ABC is conducting the compliance checks state-wide to reduce the availability of alcohol to minors. Young people under the age of 21 have a higher rate of drunk driving fatalities than the general adult population.

Minor Decoy operations have been conducted by local law enforcement throughout the state since the 1980's. When the program first began, the violation rate of retail establishments selling to minors was as high as 40 to 50 percent. When conducted on a routine basis, the rate has dropped in some cities as low as 10 percent or even below. The latest violation rate state-wide is almost 24 percent, or nearly one in five retail licensees selling to minors.

In 1994, the California Supreme Court ruled unanimously that use of underage decoys is a valid tool of law enforcement to ensure that liquor licensees are complying with the law.

ABC is a department of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency.

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