

DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL

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ABC Decoy Operation Covers Three Communities

(Torrance-Lomita-Harbor City)- Investigators of the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) conducted a minor decoy law enforcement operation July 20, 2006 that covered three Southern California Cities. The operation involved minors who worked under the direct supervision of department investigators and who attempted to purchase alcohol from 11 retail licensees in the Cities of Torrance, Lomita and Harbor City. Out of the 11 locations visited, one sold alcohol to a minor decoy.

Those who sold to the minor face a minimum fine of \$250, and/or 24 to 32 hours of community service for a first violation. In addition, ABC will take administrative action against the business's alcohol license. That may include a fine, a suspension of the license, or the permanent revocation of the license.

ABC is conducting the compliance checks state-wide to reduce the availability of alcohol to minors. Statistics have shown that young people under the age of 21 have a higher rate of drunken 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 lower. In 1994, the California Supreme Court ruled unanimously that use of underage decoys is a valid tool of law enforcement to ensure that licensees are complying with the law.

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency.

ABC is a department of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, which is under the direction of Secretary Sunne Wright McPeak, a member of the Governor's Cabinet.