

DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL

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ABC Issues Five Citations for Selling Alcohol To Minors

LOS ANGELES COUNTY - Investigators of the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) cited five employees for selling alcohol to minors on September 23, 2006. The actions were the result of a minor decoy operation in which minors under the direct supervision of department investigators, attempted to purchase alcohol from 19 retail licensees at the Los Angeles County Fair.

District Administrator, Hilarie Vazquez, stated that prior to the 2006 fair opening, ABC Investigators held a training session which was available to all alcoholic beverage servers. The training addressed use of fake identifications, carding, sales of alcoholic beverages to minors and other alcoholic beverage regulations and laws. Additionally, the fair grounds association was given advanced warning that the ABC would be monitoring the sales of alcoholic beverages throughout the fair with the use of decoys.

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 alcoholic beverage license of the business. 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 even below. 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.