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The San Diego Police Department's Vice Unit and the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control Conducts Minor Decoy Operation Resulting in No Citations

Operations in San Diego Designed to Prevent Alcohol-Related Harm

San Diego – Detectives from the San Diego Police Department's Vice Unit and an Agent from the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) visited 10 ABC-licensed businesses on June 12, 2023, conducting a Minor Decoy Operation. Minors under the direct supervision of law enforcement attempted to purchase alcoholic beverages from 10 retail licensees in the City of San Diego. All 10 clerks practiced responsible alcoholic beverage sales by checking the minor decoy's identification and refusing to sell to the minor.

Statistics have shown that young people under the age of 21 have a much higher risk of being involved in a crash than older drivers. [About 25 percent of fatal crashes involve underage drinking](#) according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

“Conducting these operations allows us to help reduce underage drinking and increase public safety,” said SDPD Vice Lieutenant Jason Scott. “We would like to thank our local businesses for doing their part to help keep our communities safe.”

“Businesses should always check IDs before selling alcohol,” said ABC Director Eric Hirata. “Preventing access to people not old enough to legally purchase alcohol improves safety on our roadways and in our communities.”

If a clerk would have sold to a minor, they would face a minimum fine of \$250 and between 24 and 32 hours of community service for a first violation. In addition, ABC may take administrative action against the alcoholic beverage license of the business where alcohol was sold to a minor. That may include a fine, suspension, or the permanent revocation of the license.

Minor Decoy operations have been conducted by local law enforcement throughout the state since the 1980s. 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 below 10 percent in some cities. In 1994, the California Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the use of minor decoys is a valid legal tool of law enforcement to make sure 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 National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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