



## DECEMBER 2013 NEWSLETTER

### Holiday safety. . .the retailers role By Lise Gervais

During this holiday season we ask all of our alcohol retailers to remember the important role they have in keeping us safe. We ask them to actively comply with all alcohol regulations with renewed efforts at staff training to ensure compliance. We rely on them to refuse sales to minors and intoxicated patrons. Assertive efforts by retailers can also protect them from liability when a patron becomes impaired and injures or kills someone.

There are also other things that retailers can do:

We ask that you recognize and respect the fact that large segments of the population do not or should not drink alcohol. These include children, pregnant women, those in alcohol addiction/abuse recovery, those taking certain medications, those whose religious or other beliefs advise against it, and those who simply chose not to drink. In a recent Gallup poll, about one-third of respondents answered "Yes" when asked, "Has drinking ever been a cause of trouble in your family?" Some may choose to not drink for that reason.

In developing promotions, displays and decorations, we ask you to consider these things. A teddy bear or Santa Claus in a vodka display may seem cute, but it conveys the wrong message to kids. Some states actually prohibit advertising that involves child-oriented symbols. While it's important to be profitable, deep discounts on alcohol can get people into trouble, particularly teens who are more price-sensitive.

Off-premise outlets have the obvious task of asking for ID to prove that a customer is 21, and more nuanced duties like determining if the customer is intoxicated, if the customer is furnishing alcohol to a minor and/or intoxicated person, and preventing shoplifting of alcohol. Management can foster compliance by frequently reinforcing training on refusal skills and keeping up on current regulation.

On-premise servers and management have the advantage of time to observe patrons, and more responsibility for making sure they are not a threat to themselves or others when they leave the establishment. Happy hour specials can incentivize drinking faster. Multi-shot drinks and over-pouring by servers can make it difficult for patrons to monitor their own consumption; the rule of "one drink per hour" is ineffective if the drink is two or three servings. People often underestimate how much they drink, and become impaired without intending to do so. On-premise

licensees should consider ways to avoid fostering intoxication. For example, why offer multi-shot drinks that equate to 3 or 4 standard drinks in a single glass? Why not use a recipe that is lower in alcohol content? Why not use measured pours? You don't have to lower prices for these drinks...just use less alcohol. Over-generous servings and specials can elicit bigger tips, but having to deal with an intoxicated patron might not be worth it.

When customers are not fit to drive, establishments should make use of the resources available in their area. Organizations like SafeRide in Atlanta, GA; TavernTaxi in Albuquerque, NM; RideOn in Portland, Oregon; Sober Cab in Minneapolis/St. Paul and others will take the customer and their car home when driving is not a good idea. Anna's RideHome offers taxi vouchers from participating bars in Seattle; the organization was started by the mother and friends of Anna Armstrong White, a 21-year old who was killed by a drunk driver. There are smart phone apps that can arrange a cab ride and tell you how much the fare will be, and most bartenders are happy to call a taxi. Many public transit systems offer free rides on holidays and most have an app, phone number or texting system that lets riders know when the next bus or train is arriving at the nearest stop, meaning less time waiting in the cold. Bars should post this kind of useful information.

Management can set the tone by updating training as laws change, reviewing important information frequently, insisting on (and rewarding) compliance, and supporting staff when they feel that they need to curtail a customer's drinking. Most managers would agree that making a couple of extra bucks on sales isn't worth the possible financial hit of legal action, losing the establishment's license or the ethical responsibility for someone being harmed.

Safety is a group effort. Assertive compliance with regulations helps us stay safe and protects the licensee from liability, as well as insure that customers have a safe and enjoyable time.

Enjoy a safe and happy holiday.

Additional information may be found at the following:  
[Responsible Retailing Forum](#)  
[Healthy Alcohol Marketplace](#)

For more information, see [www.healthyalcoholmarket.com](http://www.healthyalcoholmarket.com) Contact Pam Erickson at [pam@pamaction.com](mailto:pam@pamaction.com)

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