



## December 2019 Newsletter

### Retailer Responsibility: Taking Care of Holiday Customers By Pamela S. Erickson

During the holidays we get lots of messages about "responsibility." Usually, this involves cautioning individuals not to drink and drive or consume excessive amounts of alcohol. But, "responsibility" is everyone's job; not just the individual consumer. There is a lot that every retailer can do to promote moderation. Here are some ideas:

**1. Help customers understand what moderation means for them.** There are lots of messages about drinking "responsibly", but most people don't know exactly what that means. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has information on their website that is clear and helpful. Here is one:



**2. Help customers monitor their alcohol consumption by requiring measured pours.**

While the federal government defines a "standard drink" as 12 ounces of a 5% ABV (Alcohol by Volume) beer, 5 ounces of 12% ABV wine and 1.5 ounces of 40% distilled spirits, alcohol is generally not served or sold according to these measurements. In a store, wine and distilled spirits are usually sold in 750 ml bottles. While beer is more often sold in single-serving containers, the alcohol content can be much higher than 5%. In a restaurant or bar, spirits and wine are generally "free poured" and a bar-tender will sometimes provide a "generous pour" for high tipping customers. Beer may be poured from a tap, but usually in standard-size glasses. This scenario leaves the customer with little knowledge about how much alcohol they are consuming. By requiring standard "pours", you can sell more drinks per bottle. And your customers can better monitor their consumption. For home parties, hosts should also use measured pours so their guests don't become intoxicated or drive impaired. Stores that sell alcohol can have information about measured pours and other tips for a safe and healthy holiday party.

**3. Provide and promote low or no-alcohol drinks.**

About 40% of Americans do not drink at all and another portion must cease drinking temporarily during pregnancy including a period of time when a couple is trying to get pregnant.

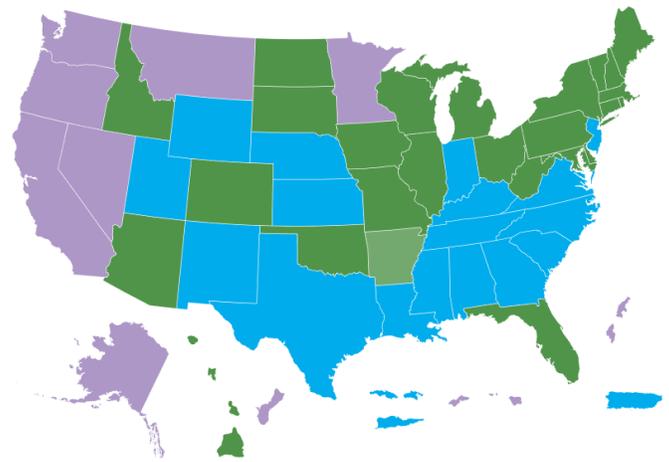
More people are looking for healthy alternatives to alcohol or products that are low in alcohol. In Europe, these products are quite popular and make up a sizeable portion of the

market. Also, the internet has many, exciting drinks that work as a non-intoxicating substitute for alcohol when someone chooses not to drink. A retailer could supply recipes and stock the special ingredients needed to concoct them.

**4. Help us eliminate drunk driving!** Just look at the safety record of our airlines. In February 2018, one person died aboard a major US airline...but it was noted that the previous airline crash involving fatalities was in 2009! While we've made great progress reducing drunk driving fatalities, we seem to be stuck at 10,000 fatalities per year plus a lot of serious injuries. But the airline record demonstrates the possibility of greater progress. Retailers can help by:

- Promoting moderate drinking including the importance of hydrating. Even if someone doesn't drive, they could possibly be involved in such things as domestic abuse, fights or vandalism. Excessive drinking is never good.
- Having a program of safe rides. This could include information about taxis, buses, and ride-share options and could include partnering with a company that will provide free or low-cost rides home. It is important to remember that even at low Blood Alcohol Content levels, there is some impairment.

**5. Help eliminate the incentives for over-service.** In many of our bars and restaurants, servers are paid a lower minimum wage and they must make up the difference in tips. This is called a "tip-credit program" which is allowed by federal and most state laws. The problem is that under a tip-credit program, servers are incentivized to over-serve alcohol, especially if business is slow. Some licensees have started a program whereby the server will get a percentage of the person's drink bill if they cut off an intoxicated patron.



	State requires employers to pay tipped employees full state minimum wage before tips.
	State requires employers to pay tipped employees a minimum cash wage above the minimum cash wage required under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (\$2.13/hour).
	State minimum cash wage payment is the same as that required under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act (\$2.13/hour).

This map can be found on the Department of Labor's website plus information about each state's minimum wage practices. Generally, the purple states treat all employees the same which means they do not permit a credit for tips. The other states allow some kind of credit. It is important to note that the federal minimum before application of tips is only \$2.13. This means an employee stands to make very little money on a very slow night. Customers should be encouraged to tip their servers because it is the right thing to do, not because they poured you an overly stiff drink.

This holiday season we ask everyone to do their part to keep friends, family and customers all safe and healthy. And, consider adopting these practices throughout the year ...not just during holidays. Thank you.

**Sources:**  
<https://www.cdc.gov/alcohol/fact-sheets/moderate-drinking.htm>  
<https://time.com/5243733/southwest-passenger-commercial-airline-death/>  
<https://www.dol.gov/agencies/whd/state/minimum-wage/tipped>