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ABC CITES CLERKS FOR SELLING ALCOHOL TO MINORS IN SAN MATEO COUNTY

(San Mateo County) - Investigators of the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) cited four clerks for selling alcoholic beverages to a minor during a Minor Decoy Operation in the County of San Mateo on December 20, 2005.

Two decoys, people under the age of 20, participated in the operation. The decoys were under direct supervision of ABC Investigators. The decoys attempted to purchase alcohol from 17 ABC licensed businesses through out the County of San Mateo. Four establishments sold alcohol to the minor 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 business's liquor license. That may include a fine, a suspension of the liquor license, or the permanent revocation of the license.

As part of Operation STAR (Statewide Traffic Action Response), the Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control is taking a pro-active approach that reduces the risks of young people under 21 years of age. STAR is a statewide effort to increase safety through enforcement and prevention efforts by five departments in California's Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, The California Highway Patrol (CHP), ABC, The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the California Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), and the California Office of Traffic Safety, (OTS). Young people have a higher rate of drunk driving fatalities than the general adult population. The minor decoy program is an effective law enforcement tool that generates public safety and awareness. ABC is conducting the compliance checks state-wide to reduce the availability of alcohol to minors

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. The latest violation rate state-wide is below 16% percent.

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

In 1994, the California Supreme Court ruled unanimously that use of underage decoys is a valid tool of law enforcement to ensure that liquor licensees are complying with the law.

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.