

DEPARTMENT OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL

3927 Lennane Drive, Suite 100
Sacramento, CA 95834
(916) 419-2510



CONTACT: Christine Weldon
ABC Fresno District Office (559) 225-6334

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ABC Revokes License of Ghaleb's Grill and Hookah Lounge *For Selling Alcohol to Minors*

Fresno – Today, at 1:00 p.m., Investigators from the California Alcoholic Beverage Control will be posting a Notice of Suspension at Ghaleb's Grill and Hookah Lounge located at 5665 N. Blackstone Ave., Suite 110 in Fresno. This action is the result of an investigation into an incident that occurred on November 8, 2009, at approximately 3:20 a.m., in which three males were involved in a single-vehicle collision in rural Fresno County. The collision, investigated by the California Highway Patrol, resulted in the death of 19-year old passenger Abraham Arango, serious injuries to 23-year old passenger Phillip McCoy, and minor injuries to 19 year old driver, Marco Murillo. CHP arrested Murillo for felony DUI and vehicular manslaughter. Murillo's BAC level was 0.097% at 6:49 a.m.

After being notified of the incident by CHP, ABC opened a Target Responsibility for Alcohol Connected Emergencies (TRACE) investigation to determine the source of the alcohol. As a result, ABC learned that the three males had visited Ghaleb's Grill and Hookah Lounge some time after 12:07 a.m. on November 8, 2009. Upon entering, they all showed some form of identification to two employees, received unknown hand-stamps and bracelets, and entered the area where the fixed bar is located. Surveillance video showed that Murillo paid for several shots of distilled spirits, which he and McCoy consumed. The three males eventually left the premises, went to eat at a local unlicensed restaurant and then drove back toward Coalinga when the collision occurred.

As a result of this incident, the Department filed an accusation against the license which led to the license being suspended for 60 days and indefinitely until the license is transferred to a new owner. The new owner will be subject to an ABC background investigation to determine if he or she is qualified to hold an ABC license. If a transfer does not occur by June 20, 2011, the license will be permanently revoked.

This incident occurred while the ABC license was on probation for prior sales to minors offenses. One occurred on February 15, 2008, during which a cocktail server at the business sold distilled spirits-infused jello shots to four underage males telling them that the jello shots contained alcohol. The cocktail server earned a 50-cent commission for each shot she sold, which is illegal under California law.

Then, on September 26, 2008, a cocktail server again sold distilled spirits-infused jello shots to two underage decoys working with Fresno Police Department. The decoys were not requested to show identification to prove that they were old enough to purchase the alcoholic beverages. Although the licensee claimed that the alcohol had been cooked out of the jello shots, the

Department had the items analyzed and determined that they contained 5% alcohol by volume, which is considered to be an alcoholic beverage and unlawful to sell to persons under 21 years of age. That investigation led to the license being suspended for 15 days and placed on probation for three years.

“The unfortunate tragedy that led to the current action reminds us how underage drinking can lead to the loss of life and other serious, life-changing consequences. It also serves as a reminder to our licensees of the importance of implementing practices and policies that promote safe and responsible alcohol consumption at their businesses. This includes taking steps to prevent underage drinking and excessive alcohol consumption for patrons of all ages,” said ABC District Administrator Christine Weldon.

TRACE is an ABC program made possible by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) through the National Highway Transportation and Safety Administration. The grant provides funding for in-depth ABC investigations of serious incidents including car crashes, but also alcohol overdoses, poisonings and assaults that result from alcohol consumption by minors.

ABC is a Department of the Business, Transportation and Housing Agency, which is under the direction of Secretary Dale E. Bonner, a member of the Governor’s Cabinet.