



NEWS RELEASE

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PROM SEASON AN ALERT TO LEGAL-AGE ALCOHOL PROVIDERS OF SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES

Recent Traffic Death of Minor Tied to Legal-Age Provider

Alcohol
and Gambling
Enforcement

Bureau of Criminal
Apprehension

Driver
and Vehicle
Services

Emergency
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Homeland
Security and
Emergency
Management

Minnesota
State Patrol

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Traffic Safety

State Fire Marshal

ST. PAUL — As prom season ramps up for high schools, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) is reminding parents, teens and others of the dangers of underage drinking, and the legal consequences of providing alcohol to minors.

According to DPS, several Minnesota cities are attempting to deter underage drinking by implementing “social host” ordinances, which make it unlawful to provide an environment where underage drinking takes place. As a misdemeanor, any host found criminally responsible of violating the ordinance in one of these cities will face a penalty of jail time and up to \$1,000 in fines.

“Underage drinking is an issue that some adults minimize due to their own behaviors as youth,” says Gordy Pehrson, youth alcohol and driving coordinator at DPS Office of Traffic Safety. “When parents and others of legal age understand the consequences of providing alcohol, they will find that it is a serious issue.”

Adults who provide alcohol to minors can be held responsible and suffer serious criminal, legal, and financial consequences including: felony charges and prison time in the case of death; civil liability charges in the case of injury, property damage or death; and increased insurance rates. In January, a 21-year-old Wisconsin man was charged with providing alcohol to Minnesota teens and is facing felony charges and prison time. The teen driver later crashed near Stillwater, killing one of her passengers.

Pehrson adds adolescent alcohol consumption can result in brain damage and impair intellectual development, and is especially dangerous with the prevalence of binge drinking.

To ensure a safe night of celebration, DPS also stresses that prom-bound teens use seat belts, pay attention behind the wheel, speak up to stop unsafe driving behaviors — and not to drink and drive.

The state’s “Not a Drop” law says driving minors cited for consuming any amount of alcohol will lose their license from 30 to 180 days, and face up to a \$700 fine and 90 days in jail. A citation of this nature will also stay on the driver’s record for 15 years. There were nearly 7,000 “not a drop” convictions issued to underage drivers during 2005–2007.

Minors will lose their license until age 18 when arrested for DWI or involved in an impaired driving crash or crime. A DWI offense can result in one year in jail, and cost up to \$20,000 when factoring in legal fees and increased insurance rates. A DWI remains on a person’s record for 15 years.

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