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SFPD and Alcohol Beverage Control Conduct Minor Decoy Operations Resulting in Citations 24-023

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The San Francisco Police Department along with agents of the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) conducted minor decoy operations resulting in five citations for selling alcohol to minors, which were conducted between January 21, 2024, and March 10, 2024. The actions were the result of a Minor Decoy operation in which a person under the age of 21 who was in the direct supervision of SFPD officers, attempted to purchase alcohol from 47 retail licensees in San Francisco.

Clerks who sold to a minor face a minimum fine of \$250, and 24 to 32 hours of community service for a first violation. In addition, ABC may take administrative action against the alcoholic beverage license of the business where alcohol was sold to a minor. That may include a fine, suspension, or the permanent revocation of the license.

“These Minor Decoy Operations will create safer communities and reduce underage drinking by holding licensees accountable for selling alcohol to those who are under 21 years old,” said Chief Bill Scott

“Businesses should always check IDs before selling alcohol,” said ABC Director Joseph McCullough. “Preventing access to people not old enough to purchase alcohol legally improves safety on our roadways and in our communities.”

Statistics have shown that young people under the age of 21 have a much higher risk of being involved in a crash than older drivers. About 25 percent of fatal crashes involve underage drinking according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA).

Minor Decoy operations have been conducted by local law enforcement throughout the state since the 1980s. When the program first began, the violation rate of retail establishments selling to minors was as high as 40 to 50 percent. When conducted routinely, the rate has dropped to below 10 percent in some cities. In 1994, the California Supreme Court ruled unanimously that the use of minor decoys is a valid legal tool of law enforcement to ensure that licensees comply with the law.

Funding for this program was provided by a grant from ABC through the department’s Alcohol Policing Partnership (APP) program.

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