

## ENERGY DRINKS

### September 2008

There are energy drinks and then there are energy drinks! And energy drinks are in the news! First, there is a difference between two types of popular energy drinks that are currently available: one contains alcohol and the other doesn't.

Concerns have centered around the marketing of alcohol energy drinks, the appeal to underage consumers and the possible unacceptable health risks. Attorneys General from eleven states launched an investigation into alcoholic energy drinks produced by more than a dozen companies and threatened legal action against those companies.

Anheuser-Busch produces two beverages, Tilt and Bud Extra; both contain alcohol. Anheuser-Busch has recently agreed to remove ingredients such as caffeine and guarana from those beverages, thus eliminating the stimulants from these alcohol products. This company's spokesperson said, "We have determined that competing in the prepackaged caffeinated alcohol beverage sector may detract from our reputation as the global industry leader in promoting responsibility among adults who drink and discouraging underage drinking." They further pledged to call on other alcohol producers to also stop making prepackaged caffeinated alcohol beverages.

Sparks, the leading alcoholic energy drink on the market, is made by Miller. That company's officials say they have no plans to pull the Spark beverage from store shelves, alter the ingredients or review the marketing strategy for the product. CBS has produced a two-part series on the dangers of Sparks. The CBS news team found that one can of Sparks contains 214 milligrams of caffeine, as much as six cans of cola. A reporter consumes three cans of Sparks on-camera and finds that although her blood alcohol level spikes to one and a half times the legal limit, she feels deceptively "awake and alert."

Mixing energy drinks with alcohol is a growing concern because the stimulants in energy drinks can mask the intoxicating effects of alcohol and allow drinkers to stay awake longer and consume more alcohol. Young people often "mix" their own drinks, combining alcohol with energy drinks such as Red Bull. Research from Wake Forest University showed that students who mix alcohol and energy drinks double their risk of being hurt or injured, requiring medical attention, driving with an intoxicated driver, being taken advantage of sexually, or taking advantage of another sexually. The consumers can't tell if they're drunk; they can't tell if someone else is drunk.

Other companies producing the alcoholic energy drinks and other products designed to prevent hangovers and other ill effects of alcohol overconsumption that were being marketed earlier this year are:

- Purple Beverage Company's signature drink, "Purple," is a mix of seven fruit juices. It is marketed as a mixer, with the slogan, "Detox as you tox." They claim that mixing the drink with alcohol improves the drink's antioxidant power.
- Constellation Brands market "Wide Eye," a 60-proof schnapps in flavors such as Cherry Bomb and Mango Chill that contain 55 milligrams of caffeine.
- Wingard USA is selling VS Vodka which contains caffeine and taurine, both common ingredients in energy drinks.
- Natural Patches USA is marketing another product that is a transdermal vitamin B1 patch that the maker says will prevent hangovers.
- On the way from a Colombian liquor company, FlipShotz is frozen Frost Shots. It is designed to allow multiple drinkers to do shots of liquor simultaneously from a long wooden paddle.