NORTH CAROLINA
GOVERNOR'S HIGHWAY SAFETY PROGRAM

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The Consequences of Underage Drinking

Zero tolerance means zero chances.

BOOZE IT & LOSE IT.

North Carolina Department of Transportation
Governor's Highway Safety Program

According to the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, there are 11 million underage drinkers in the United States, and 7.2 million of those are considered binge drinkers. More than 2 million are classified as heavy drinkers.

In 2006, 195 16-to 20-year olds were fatality injured on North Carolina roads. Twenty-seven of those fatalities were in alcohol-related traffic crashes.

Underage drinking is a growing national concern. In March 2007, Acting U.S. Surgeon General Kenneth P. Moritsugu announced a "Call to Action to Reduce and Prevent Underage Drinking" to raise awareness about underage drinking as a major health issue.

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What is the Zero Tolerance Law?

The Zero Tolerance Law makes it illegal for persons under age 21 to drive after consuming alcohol or drugs. If you are under age 21 it is illegal to:

- *Drive while consuming alcohol.*
- *Drive while any amount of alcohol you previously drank is still in your system.*
- *Drive while drugs you previously consumed remain in your system, unless the drugs were lawfully obtained (prescribed to you) and taken as prescribed.*

What happens if you have any detectable concentration of alcohol when stopped?

- *Drivers under age 21 who have any detectable alcohol concentration immediately lose their driver license for 30 days, on the spot.*
- *Any reading above 0.00 on an alcohol screening test is sufficient evidence to convict. Results of screenings can be used in court.*
- *Odor of alcohol plus refusal to take an alcohol screening test is sufficient evidence to convict.*
- *Refusal to submit to a chemical analysis will result in an automatic one-year driver license revocation.*

What happens if you are under age 21 and convicted of driving after consuming alcohol or drugs? Penalties include:

- *One-year driver license revocation.*
- *Limited driving privilege only if 18, 19 or 20 years old at the time of charge and no prior conviction for this charge.*
- *Punishment as a Class 2 misdemeanor:*
  - *Community service hours and $200 fee or jail time.*

  - *Court cost: $120.*
  - *Fine: up to $1,000.*
  - *Attorney's fees: $500 to $1,000.*
  - *Insurance premiums can increase by 400 percent.*

As of December 2006, it is it is illegal for a person under age 21 to *drink* alcohol.

Odor of alcohol plus refusal to take an alcohol screening test is sufficient evidence to convict.

What if you are under age and convicted of drinking alcohol?

- *Drinking by a person under age 19 is a Class 1 Misdemeanor and punishment can include a fine in the discretion of the judge, community service hours and a $200 fee or jail, plus court costs of $120;*
- *Drinking by a person age 19 or 20 is a Class 3 Misdemeanor which punishment can include a fine of up to $200 and community service hours and a $200 fee or jail, plus court costs of $120.*
- *Attorney's fees: $300 to $800.*

What happens if you are under age 21 and convicted of purchasing or attempting to purchase alcoholic beverages? Penalties include:

- *One-year driver license revocation.*
- *No limited driving privilege.*
- *Punishment as a Class 1 misdemeanor:*
- *Community service hours and a $200 fee or jail time.*
- *Court cost: $120.*
- *Fine is discretion of the judge.*
- *Attorney's fees: $500 to $1,000.*
- *Insurance rates increase for three years.*

REMEMBER

You may be required to include a conviction for one of these offenses on a job or school application. A conviction may affect your ability to get a job or be accepted at a college.