



Press Release

City of San Luis Obispo
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"Service, Pride, Integrity"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New Social Host Ordinance Means: Think Twice about Your Party Guest List!

In San Luis Obispo, most underage drinkers, including those still in high school, access and consume alcohol at privately hosted parties. Many of those gatherings are hosted by local college students who have few or no controls in place to determine whether those who drink alcohol at the parties are at least 21 years of age. Underage access to alcohol is a significant safety issue, especially for teenagers and young adults whose judgment is not fully developed. Each year, intoxicated minors become victims of crimes, including sexual assault; require medical treatment for alcohol overdoses and/or related injuries; commit crimes in our community; and drive while intoxicated.

In recognition of the serious problems that result from underage drinking, the City Council formally adopted a new Social Host ordinance, strengthening the provisions of a previously existing ordinance. The new law will become effective May 8, 2009. The ordinance makes it illegal for anyone to host a party or gathering where a minor under 21 drinks alcohol.

Key points of the Social Host ordinance are:

- 1) Effective May 8, 2009, if a person hosts a gathering with as few as three people present who are under 21 years of age and if even just one of those minors possesses or consumes alcohol, the host is guilty of a misdemeanor, for which he or she can be arrested or issued a citation.
- 2) The prescribed minimum fine for a first violation of the Social Host ordinance is \$350; \$700 for a second offense; and \$1,000 for a third offense within any 12-month period.

Under state law, minors who possess alcohol are also guilty of the misdemeanor crime of being a minor in possession of alcohol, and they too can be arrested or cited.

Before presenting the new Social Host ordinance to the City Council, Police Department staff members spent months researching effective ordinances in use in other communities, and

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meeting with stakeholder groups and individuals to discuss the proposed new ordinance provisions, including:

- Cal Poly Associated Students, Inc. (ASI) Board
- Cal Poly ASI President and Executive Director
- Student Community Liaison Committee (SCLC)
- San Luis Obispo County Drug and Alcohol Advisory Board
- Cuesta College Student Forum (including numerous members of student government)
- Residents for Quality Neighborhoods (RQN)

Support for the ordinance was generally strong among stakeholders and none expressed opposition to it.

The text of the ordinance is as follows:

SLOMC Section 9.05.010 Hosting a gathering where underage persons consume alcohol
Except as permitted by Article I, Section 4 of the California Constitution and by state law, it is unlawful for any person to permit, allow, or host a party, gathering, or event at his or her place of residence or other private property, place or premises under his or her control where three or more persons under the age of twenty-one years are present and alcoholic beverages are being possessed or consumed by one or more persons under the age of twenty-one years at that location. A violation of this section is a misdemeanor and deemed to be a threat to the public peace, health, safety, and general welfare and is therefore subject to second response cost recovery pursuant to Section [9.21.050](#).

To summarize, the intent of the new ordinance is to hold party hosts responsible if they allow minors to consume or possess alcohol at their parties or gatherings. The focus of police enforcement will be parties and gatherings that are causing a disturbance, or are obviously attracting minors. Party hosts and minors who are drinking alcohol at their parties will be held criminally accountable.