

NSW Drink Spiking Action Group

The NSW Drink Spiking Action Group is actively working to improve the response to drink spiking by relevant Government agencies. One of its aims is to correct common misconceptions associated with drink spiking by providing accurate information to the community.

Recognising that the media makes a significant contribution in raising public awareness of the issue, it is hoped that this media information kit will be considered by reporters and editors as a reference guide when reporting on incidences of drink spiking, or when making reference to this issue.

BACKGROUND OF ISSUE

Drink spiking is the addition of drugs (licit or illicit) or alcohol to a drink (either alcoholic or non-alcoholic) without the knowledge or consent of the person consuming it. Food can also be 'spiked' but this occurs far less frequently. In most incidences, drink spiking does not involve any further criminal victimisation. However in some instances victims of drink spiking may also become victims of other crimes such as robbery, assault and sexual assault.

Drug facilitated Sexual Assault is a sexual assault which is facilitated through the use of drugs and/or alcohol by the victim. The drugs may have been administered by someone else or may have been used voluntarily by the victim but in all instances their use interferes with the victim's ability to consent to sexual activity.

CURRENT SITUATION

Although it remains difficult to accurately quantify the number of drink spiking cases in NSW, general trends obtained from a number of databases indicates that drink spiking incidents remain relatively low, with very few incidents substantiated. This could be due to a number of reasons. Unfortunately, questionable and unreliable complaints are made to police both deliberate and unintentional. This is believed to be attributed to inexperienced or irresponsible consumption of alcohol, particularly by young people. Symptoms consistent with drink spiking, such as loss of memory, loss of consciousness, poor coordination, balance and impaired judgment are also associated with alcohol intoxication.

Contrary to public perception, alcohol is believed to be the most commonly used 'drug' in drink spiking incidents. This is confirmed by toxicology results which are more likely to detect high levels of alcohol only. Drug detections in toxicology results are not common, as testing needs to be conducted within 24 hours to detect certain drugs in the victims system. It is important to remember that victims frequently report incidences of drink spiking during or after being involved in social settings where alcohol consumption occurs.

Because of these issues, as well as some of the complexities inherent in effective investigation of drink spiking, police consider the best way to reduce the likelihood of drink spiking is good quality public education, abstinence from illicit drug use and to encourage responsible consumption of alcohol.



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NSW Police is committed to ensuring that all allegations of drink spiking are investigated to high professional and ethical standards, and with due rigour. Police work with external agencies and with local community action projects such as Liquor Licensing Accords and Community Drug and Alcohol Action Teams to educate the public and develop prevention strategies for drink spiking.

CONCLUSION

The NSW Drink Spiking Action Group hopes that NSW Police and media representatives can work together to ensure that the public receive balanced and accurate media coverage on the issue of drink spiking. DSAG has developed the attached Drink Spiking Myths and Facts sheet for your information and trusts that this will assist in providing more accurate information to the public. To this end, the DSAG recommends the following when reporting on the issue of drink spiking, as an isolated incident, or for broader discussion.

Aim to:

- Verify a victim's story with the police who responded to the incident
- Validate that it is a drink spiking incident and not mistaken for another mishap such as food poisoning
- Check and verify statistics
- Promote public awareness of safety practice such as looking out for your friends
- Promote responsible consumption of alcohol
- Promote prompt reporting of suspected incidences to police

Avoid:

- Listing the details of substances used or its effect on the victim. (This may provide potential offenders with information they may not otherwise have had)
- Promoting drink spiking detection devices as these are not accurate and may promote false safety
- Unnecessary emotive language
- Relying on information from dubious sources

Attached also for your convenience are contact details for relevant NSW Government agencies and their representatives who are available to provide further clarification or information. DSAG recommends that these people be approached to provide support and expertise to media representatives in the event of any media coverage on drink spiking.

IN AN EMERGENCY CALL 000

POLICE HEADQUARTERS

1 Charles Street
Parramatta NSW 2150
Ph (02) 8835 9271
International 612 8835 9271
7.30am - 5pm AEST, Monday to Friday

WEB SITE

www.police.nsw.gov.au

CUSTOMER ASSISTANCE UNIT

Sydney Metropolitan Area
Free call 1800 622 571

CRIME STOPPERS

This community based policing service gathers details of criminal activity volunteered by members of the public. Cash rewards of up to \$1,000 are available if this information leads to an arrest. Information can be given anonymously.

Free call 1800 333 000

POLICE ASSISTANCE LINE

For reporting of crime which does not require immediate police presence.

24 hour service 131 444



www.crimestoppers.com.au

Produced by NSW Police
Public Affairs Branch, December 2006.