

Drink spiking

A fact sheet for licensees

Drink spiking is a growing problem. It happens when alcohol or another substance is added to a drink without the drink owner's permission. Even though drink spiking is illegal, it has occurred in Queensland.

Drink spiking is illegal, dangerous and can have serious criminal and health consequences.

The Liquor Licensing Division is working with other Queensland Government agencies, licensed premises and community organisations to help stamp out this dangerous practice.

Research shows drink spiking happens mostly in licensed premises that have a nightclub style of entertainment.

The majority of victims are female and many know their attacker. There have even been cases reported of women being photographed in compromising positions and the photographs then being posted on the internet.

Drink spiking is illegal. It's a very dangerous practice and can lead to:

- assault
- robbery
- rape and sexual assault
- extreme intoxication
- outrageous and uncharacteristic behaviour
- side affects to the victim's health from unknown drugs
- death

The Liquor Licensing Division receives information about drink spiking from various sources and will take disciplinary action against licensees who do not actively discourage drink spiking if incidents have previously occurred at their premises.

Staff of licensed premises have been found, in some cases, to be the offender or have intentionally helped an offender to spike a drink.

Licensees are especially encouraged to ensure staff place 'unattended drink cards' over drinks temporarily left by patrons. Ideally the graphic personal nature of the warning on these cards will discourage patrons from leaving their drinks unattended.

Unattended drink cards, along with posters advising patrons of how to reduce the likelihood of their drinks being spiked are available from the Division.

The vigilance of you or your staff could save a person's life or prevent a rape. Below are steps to follow in suspicious circumstances.

Scenario 1

If a person suddenly appears to develop the symptoms of being unduly intoxicated or acts in an outrageously provocative manner, take the following action:

- Talk to the person and offer assistance
- Find out if they have a trusted friend in the venue who can help them get home
- If they become sleepy while you are speaking to them, there is a good chance they are the victim of drink spiking
- Carefully watch the person and arrange for a manager to assist them
- Take the person's drink in its original container and give it to a manager for safekeeping in a secure location
- If possible, only touch the lowest part of the container and place it in a plastic bag. The drink may be crucial evidence in finding an offender
- Call an ambulance and the police if the person appears to have been drugged
- If you are suspicious of anyone in the company of the 'victim', ask for their ID and take note of details.

Scenario 2

If you think a person who is disoriented and unsteady on their feet is being escorted from the premises by a stranger, take the following action:

- Ask the possible offender for ID and take note of the details
- Ask the possible offender to look at the camera when that person walks past a surveillance camera
- Talk to the unsteady person and find out if they know the person taking them off the premises
- If they do not know the other person, there is a good chance the unsteady person is a victim of drink spiking
- Advise the possible offender that in the interests of ensuring a criminal offence is not committed you will look after the unsteady person
- Arrange for a manager to assess the situation
- Call an ambulance and the police if the person appears to have been drugged.

Scenario 3

If a person lingers around a table where a drink has been left unattended, take the following action:

- Approach the person and ask why they have an interest in that table
- If they don't have a legitimate reason ask for ID and take note of the details
- Ensure the person moves away from the table
- If you believe the drink may have been spiked, take it and follow the appropriate steps outlined in scenario 1
- Leave a note on the table advising that the drink may have been spiked and is being retained by the management.

Follow-up action

Always record the details of each incident in the incident register held at the premises and initiate discussions about these incidents at staff meetings.

If you think that a drink-spiking incident has occurred, report the matter to the police.

Some licensed premises go further in the effort to increase awareness about drink spiking by arranging for DJs to make verbal announcements/warnings or displaying regular messages on video screens.

Emergency plan for a medical incident

Your procedures manual should include an emergency plan for a medical incident and this procedure should be well known to staff.

The emergency plan can be particularly useful if you do have a drink spiking incident on your premises. The plan should include the following information:

- What do you do when a medical emergency is reported?
- Location of telephone, clearly marked with emergency telephone numbers (eg 000)
- Do staff know to call the police as well as an ambulance in certain circumstances (such as a suspected drink spiking, assault, etc)? Whose responsibility is it to make the call?
- Who needs to be notified (eg duty manager, nominee etc)?
- Location of first aid kit
- First aid officer on duty and other staff who are trained in first aid
- Collect evidence (eg the glass/bottle if suspected drink spiking)
- Block off the area if a crime was committed (using chairs and tables if necessary).

For more information please contact:

The Liquor Licensing Division
Web site: www.liquor.qld.gov.au
or call 1300 658 030 (for the cost of a local call).

24-hour Sexual Assault Helpline: 1800 010 120.

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The laws referred to in this guide are complex and various qualifications may apply in different circumstances. You are encouraged to obtain independent legal or financial advice if you are unsure of how these laws apply to your situation.

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