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May 21, 2019

The time is drawing near for high school graduation. Along with graduation comes the time to celebrate this milestone of life. As each year comes and goes we hear about the tragedy of motor vehicle crashes that are alcohol-related. Everyone should remember his or her graduation as the first step into adulthood and the first step of being on your own, not remembering the injury or death of a friend or loved one.

Each year, law enforcement officials receive numerous calls in regard to underage alcohol related graduation parties. Persons under the age of 21 organize some and the parents of the graduates organize others. Under Wisconsin State Statute 125 it states: "No adult may knowingly permit or fail to take action to prevent illegal consumption of alcoholic beverages by an underage person on premises owned by the adult or under the adult's control."

Under this statute, you can be fined from \$376.00 to \$691.00 and/or jailed for 90 days---per offense. Each subject who is found to have been consuming alcohol while underage can be charged as a separate offense against the subject providing the alcohol to the underage person(s).

Some parents try to justify their actions by insisting that everyone turn over their car keys and have them promise to spend the night. Providing alcohol to underage persons or allowing underage persons to consume alcohol is not lawful, regardless of whether or not they spend the night, turn over their keys, etc.

Listed below is information related to the costs and penalties that are associated with underage alcohol offenses:

Ages 17-20

- 1<sup>st</sup> Offense - - \$187.00 plus 90 day license suspension
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Offense - - \$313.00 plus 1 year license suspension
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Offense - - \$439.00 plus 2 year license suspension and assessment
- 4<sup>th</sup> Offense - - \$691.00 plus 2 year license suspension and assessment

In the event an underage person consumes alcohol provided by an adult, keeping in mind that an "adult" in this instance is any person over the age of 17, operates a motor vehicle and is arrested for O.W.I., the penalty is as follows:

\$861.00 plus 6 month license revocation. Blood alcohol content above .15 will result in fines up to \$974.00 and a possible one year license revocation. Insurance rates are elevated into the "high risk" category for 2-3 years following a conviction. In addition, an Ignition Interlock Device is now required for any conviction with a blood alcohol concentration of .15 or above. The associated costs for this device are approximately \$1,000 for the duration of its installation.

Information relating to an alcohol-related conviction goes onto your driving record. Information on your driving record is for life. That means that a poor choice when you are 17 or 18 years old will follow you and may come back to haunt you later in life. Furthermore, insurance companies have access to driving record information and your rates will increase with alcohol-related convictions on your record.

Please think of this information when embarking on your graduation celebration. If you have any questions or would like further information, please feel free to contact the Tomah Police Department at 374-7400.

Congratulations and Stay Safe!

TOMAH POLICE DEPARTMENT



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