



*Applied Research for Community Health & Safety\**

## NEWS RELEASE

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# Community members target substance abuse

*The Ready, Aim, Fire Coalition continues prevention efforts.*

While the recently concluded holiday season was a time of joy and celebration for many, it was also a time of sorrow and even tragedy for the hundreds of people who were arrested for driving under the influence (DUI) of alcohol.

Between December 18 and January 3, 25 law enforcement agencies throughout San Bernardino County conducted the *Avoid the 25* program, a multi-agency collaborative operation that utilized six sobriety checkpoints and multiple saturation patrols aimed at ensuring public safety by removing DUI drivers from the roadways. These efforts resulted in the arrest of 653 people, which is ten more than during a similar campaign the previous year.

Despite widespread efforts to deter drunken driving, countywide, there were still at least two crashes, resulting in three fatalities that sheriff's officials suspect were alcohol related.

And while DUI incidents are generally the first problem people associate with excessive alcohol consumption, there are a myriad of other problems associated with alcohol that have negative impacts, especially on youth.

Research studies show that youth who begin drinking alcohol before age 15 are four times more likely to become dependent on alcohol than those who wait to begin drinking until age 21.

Additionally, those who begin drinking before age 13 are twice as likely to have unplanned sex during college, and more than twice as likely to have unprotected sex during college, as those who do not start drinking until after age 19.

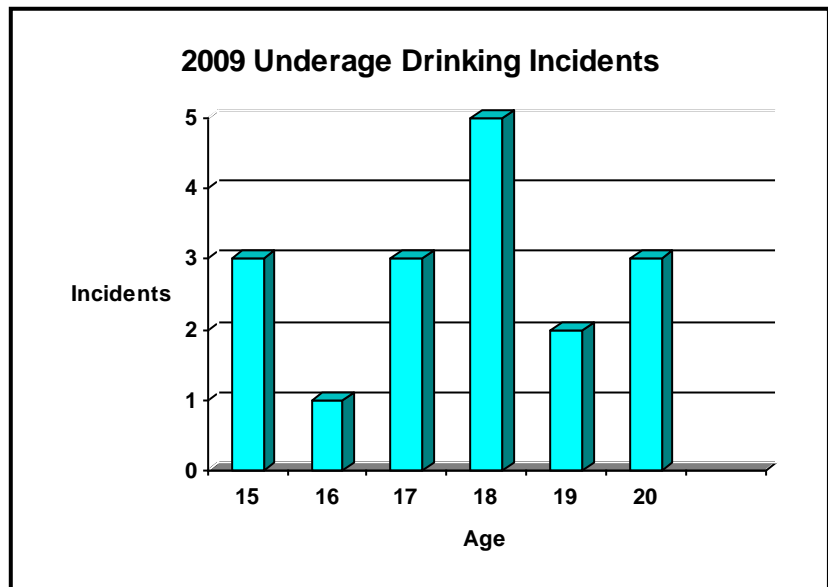
The dangers associated with youth drinking are well documented. According to the American Medical Association's Office of Alcohol/Drug Abuse, alcohol is the number one drug of choice for youth. It is also a contributing factor in the death of more teens than all other illicit drugs combined — by a ratio of four to one.

According to results of the 2008 California Healthy Kids Survey, young people in San Bernardino County first use alcohol at the age of 12 and an alarming 55% report alcohol is easy for them to get.

Locally, it would appear youth access to alcohol is also a problem since in 2009, the Yucca Valley Fire Department responded to 17 incidents involving underage drinking as illustrated in the chart.

National research studies have repeatedly identified house parties as the primary source from which minors obtain alcohol and data collected locally supports this as well.

A community survey conducted last year in Yucca Valley found that 91% of respondents indicated adults who purchase alcohol for minors is harmful to the community. Additionally, 76% of respondents said they were concerned about underage drinking at house parties and 56% said that adults should be held accountable for hosting underage drinking parties.



To address not only underage drinking but other substance abuse related issues as well, the Ready, Aim, Fire coalition, made up of concerned Yucca Valley residents, has been meeting to identify potential solutions to these problems. One solution that has been identified is adoption of a social host ordinance, a type of law that holds adults accountable for hosting underage drinking parties.

If you would like to actively participate in the coalition's substance abuse prevention efforts, Ready, Aim, Fire's next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 14, at 5:30 p.m. at the Morongo Basin Counseling and Recovery Center, 55475 Santa Fe Trail, Yucca Valley.

For more information contact Diana or Joan at (760) 369-1074.