

# DECEPTIVE LABELING: ALCOHOLIC ENERGY DRINKS

## CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?



*“Alcohol producers are taking advantage of the popularity of non-alcoholic energy drinks to sell their products to youth. They package their products so that they are indistinguishable from non-alcoholic energy drinks, confusing consumers, retailers, parents, law enforcement officers, & others who can’t tell which drinks contain alcohol and which do not.”*

*-James Mosher, Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation-*

### Alcoholic Energy Drinks are easily Accessible and Marketed to Youth

- Alcoholic energy drinks are prepackaged beverages that contain alcohol, caffeine and other stimulants
- The color and shape of the packaging, its presence at sporting events, and its dedicated sites on the Internet seem to be designed exclusively for young people
- Alcoholic beverage manufacturers have taken advantage of the youth appeal [to nonalcoholic energy drinks] of these drinks by engaging in aggressive marketing campaigns for pre-mixed alcoholic energy drinks (A letter written to the Tobacco Tax and Trade Bureau (TTB) signed by Chief Legal Officers in 29 States)
- Some retailers do not recognize energy drinks contain alcohol because the packaging is so similar to that of regular energy drinks (Kentucky Office of Beverage Control’s Enforcement Division)

### A Dangerous Combination

- Caffeine, a stimulant, masks the intoxicating effects of alcohol causing those under the influence to mistakenly think they are less intoxicated
- Youth are more vulnerable because they are more likely to take risks and suffer from higher rates of alcohol problems, including traffic accidents, violence, sexual assault, and suicide (Marin Institute, Alcohol, Energy Drinks, and Youth: A Dangerous Mix, 2007)
- Most alcoholic energy drinks are categorized as malt beverages even though their alcohol content by volume is considerably greater than that of beer

### Many Alcoholic Energy Drinks are Cheaper Than Their Non-Alcoholic Counterparts

- Pre-mixed alcoholic energy drinks provide a cheap alternative to purchasing two types of beverages separately
- The price of alcohol has important implications aimed at curbing alcohol use and abuse among youth and young adults
- In a survey of self-reported responses, high school students admit to reducing their overall alcohol use because of price increases

(Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 22(4):441-454)

These alcoholic brands cost about 25 percent less than three nonalcoholic brands.

#### Alcoholic Brands

Sparks	\$1.53
Tilt	\$1.53

#### Nonalcoholic Brands

Rockstar Juiced	\$2.03
Lost Energy	\$2.07
SoBe Adrenaline Rush	\$2.03

Marin Institute, Alcohol, Energy Drinks, and Youth: A Dangerous Mix, 2007

