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Alcohol Ads Still Reaching Youth on the Radio: Industry's Voluntary Standards Remain an Issue

(Baltimore, MD) – Almost one out of 11 alcohol radio ads in 75 markets across the nation in 2009 failed to comply with the industry's voluntary standard for the placement of advertising, according to the latest analysis conducted by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health.

In 2003, trade groups for beer and distilled spirits committed to placing alcohol ads in media venues only when underage youth comprise less than or equal to 30 percent of the audience, since 30 percent of the audience is 20 years old or younger.

The CAMY analysis found that 9% of the ads in 75 markets that account for almost 50% of radio listeners age 12 and older failed to meet the industry standards. Three brands alone – Miller Lite, Bud Light, and Coors Light – placed more than half of these violating ads.

The National Research Council, the Institute of Medicine and 24 state attorneys general have called on the alcohol industry to beef up its standard and meet a "proportional" 15 percent placement standard, given the fact that the group most at risk for underage drinking – 12 to 20 year-olds – is approximately 15 percent of the U.S. population.

"A nine percent failure rate for an already weak standard means that a significant number of young people are being overexposed to alcohol advertising on the radio," said Dr. David Jernigan, CAMY director. "Reducing the voluntary standard to 15 percent would go a long way to keeping our young people safe and away from the undue influence of alcohol marketing."

The influence of radio as a local media venue continues even in this dynamic digital age, as 93 percent of Americans ages 12 and older reported that they owned and/or used an AM-FM radio in 2011.

For this report, CAMY analyzed alcohol advertisements placed on the radio in the 75 local markets in the United States in 2009 for which full-year data from a consistent survey methodology were available.



These markets represent 46.5 percent of the U.S. population age 12 and above. Other key findings include:

- In 2009, youth ages 12-20 were more likely per capita than adults to hear 32 percent of alcohol advertising placements.
- Distilled spirits were the most common type of alcohol advertisement to overexpose youth audiences in Portable People Meter (PPM™) markets. The PPM™ is a new method of measuring listening, in which survey participants agree to wear a small device that receives a special signal from each radio station. PPMs™ allow for more precise measurement of actual listening because they do not depend on survey participants' active recall and do not require them to record their listening behavior in a paper diary
- In diary markets, where the PPM™ is not yet in use and where people kept a paper diary of radio listening in 15-minute increments throughout the day, beer and alcopops advertising was most likely to overexpose youth.
- Fifteen brands garnered 25 percent or more of their exposure to youth in at least 10 percent of markets from advertising not in compliance with the industry's 30 percent standard.
- In the majority of the 11 markets where Arbitron's Portable People Meters were deployed for all of 2009, girls ages 12-20 were more likely than boys of the same age to be exposed to advertising for alcopops, distilled spirits, and wine.

"The perception that young people are only listening to music on their iPods, cell phones and the Internet is naive," said Jernigan. "Radio is still a source of entertainment for youth and alcohol ads are still finding their way to too many young ears."

Alcohol use is the leading drug problem among youth in the United States. It is responsible for 4,600 deaths per year among young people under the age of 21. Every day, nearly 5,000 young people under the age of 16 take their first drink, and binge drinking (defined as consuming five or more drinks within 2 hours) accounts for more than 90 percent of the alcohol consumed by young people.

At least 13 longitudinal research studies have found that the more young people are exposed to alcohol marketing, the more likely they are to start drinking or, if already drinking, to drink more.

The Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth monitors the marketing practices of the alcohol industry to focus attention and action on industry practices that jeopardize the health and safety of America's youth. The Center was founded in 2002 at Georgetown University with funding from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The Center moved to the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2008 and is currently funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information, visit www.camy.org.

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