

# Things are changing when it comes to drinking

By Bonar Tucker  
YELLIN' REBEL

Mention spring break and not too many will walk away without also mentioning Fort Lauderdale, Fla., or Corpus Christi, Texas with lots of sun, surf, parties and...booze. Right?

Well, on campuses across America, that would depend on just whom you were speaking to.

Fort Lauderdale and Corpus Christi both have been noted for years as "hot spots" for fun during the week of college spring vacations.

But the tides are turning. Each year a significant drop in attendance is seen among those who hit the beaches to "party hardy." And parties consisting of "all the alcohol you can handle" are also on the decline nationwide.

"Some of that could be attributed to a very active Mothers Against Drunk Driving chapter in Florida, as well as in other cities," said Sandy Heverly, executive director of the Las Vegas MADD

organization.

"We have worked very hard in trying to curb activity in Fort Lauderdale during the break. We have put forth a great deal of education in preventative programs to curb these activities nationwide," Heverly said.

Corpus Christi, which had an estimated 45,000 students catching rays and partying during the past Spring Breaks, is expecting only about 5,000 this year.

The reasons?

"It's hard to say for sure," said Bud Inman, assistant chief ranger at Lake Mead. "But there's no doubt about it, attitudes are changing."

Inman bases his statement on what he has seen in his 15 years of service at the lake. Though he said the lake rangers are "really enforcing" the laws and pay particularly close attention to the gatherings at Lake Mead, he said he feels people are now more aware of other people.

"Drinking will always be around," said Inman, "but people definitely seem to be becoming

more aware of its problems and aware of others."

Education may be the key. Just giving students the opportunity to become aware of a few facts and statistics leaves them open to make their own decisions.

A few of those facts:

Violent deaths—including accidents, homicides, and suicides—account for more than 77 percent of mortalities among people ages 15 to 24. Too often, the violence is combined with alcohol consumption, according to a Sept. 22, 1987 article in the Dallas Morning News.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration reported that in 1986, approximately ten 15 to 19-year-olds died each day in alcohol-related traffic crashes.

Although young people (ages 15 to 24) made up only about 19 percent of the licensed drivers, still they accounted for nearly 37 percent of the alcohol-related traffic fatalities for 1986.

In the fall of 1986, Mark Seeburger was an unfortunate example. Seeburger, an 18-year-old

Phi Kappa Psi pledge at the University of Texas, died in his sleep from alcohol poisoning after consuming half a bottle of rum as part of the fraternity's initiation, according to a November, 1986 Newsweek article.

There are approximately 46,000 deaths in U.S. car crashes each year. Drinking alcoholic beverages is a factor in at least half of all highway deaths. Alcohol consumption is responsible for injuries to more than 500,000 people annually, according to MADD.

The number one killer of 15 to 24 year-olds is drunk driving accidents. Time magazine reported alcohol is the number one drug of choice on campus.

A recent poll showed 24 percent of students said they had friends with a drinking problem.

A 1986 Gallup poll showed one out of every three teenagers say they have been in a car with a driver their age who was intoxicated.

According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, alcohol is the overwhelming drug of choice—twice as popular as marijuana and ten times as popular as cocaine.

Alcohol (and/or drugs) is involved in the majority of acquaintance rape cases across the country.

And locally, from Lake Mead: Out of 450 arrests (beyond disorderly conduct citations), a whopping 85 percent were alcohol related.

In 1988, there were four drownings at Lake Mead with alcohol as a factor.

"Just last weekend," reported Inman, "A Northern Arizona University student drowned at Katherine's Landing during their spring break. He had been drinking too much and had gone into the water and just didn't come up."

"The lethal combination is alcohol and water," said Inman. "A person is much more apt to drown under those conditions."

Inman explains that even a good swimmer has trouble with

drinking while playing in the water.

"It is just so easy to pass out under water. For whatever reason, systems just seem to shut down," he said. "That, combined with the fact that a person who's been drinking can't tell up from down in the water, puts people in poor positions for handling themselves."

Students seem to be taking the messages to heart. Across the country, alcohol-free clubs are cropping up with extra activities planned during spring break.

New York University students have started their own designated driver system which has had an increasing number of calls during the break in the past two years.

Safe Rides, a University of Oregon based group, was started by students and provides rides home for those too intoxicated to do so safely.

A National Report Card issued in late 1987 by the Alcohol, Drug Abuse and Mental Health Administration stated that the goal for 1990 is a reduction to fewer than 9.5 per 100,000 people in alcohol related auto fatalities.

That goal is believable based on the current trend of reduction.

In 1977 there were 11.5 deaths (alcohol related auto fatalities) per 100,000 while in 1985 that number had fallen to 9.5 deaths per 100,000.

Heverly said, "The Las Vegas area has never been a high profile area for increased fatalities and injuries during Spring Break. But we encourage students to use designated drivers because 70-80 percent of all situations like that involve alcohol."

The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department is called in to aid the federal law enforcement officers at Lake Mead during the break.

"We just won't tolerate behavior that interferes with other people," said Inman. "Luckily, most students are beginning to feel the same way."



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Even one drink is too many if you plan to drive before its effect wears off, according to MADD. For the average person (150-180 lbs.):

2 - 12 oz. cans of beer or 2 - 3 oz. glasses of wine or 2 - 1 oz. glasses of distilled spirits in one hour will put the blood alcohol content (BAC) at .04 - .05 percent.

**B.A.C. CRASH LIKELIHOOD vs. SOBER**

.05	1 1/2 times
.10	6 times
.15	25 times
.20	100 times

Alcohol takes away moisture from the body. This moisture is necessary in the brain and other vital areas. Couple that with a day in the sun and the body simply isn't receiving enough liquid to carry on.

"Even light to moderate drinking combined with a day in the sun is just as dangerous as heavy drinking because of the cumulative effects," said Inman. "A person has just put himself in a poor position for any kind of safety even with a couple of beers."