

## **West Des Moines has drop in underage alcohol sales**

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Officials with the West Des Moines Police Department credit classes started two years ago to educate businesses about avoiding the sale of alcohol to underage customers with a 47 percent drop in those sales last year compared with 2008.

According to a news release from the police department, during 2009 West Des Moines officers checked on 148 businesses in the city to see if employees would sell alcohol to someone underage. Of those checked, 12 establishments, or 8 percent, had an employee sell alcoholic beverages to the underage buyer.

Violations have declined from a high of 43 in 2006 to 31 in 2007, 23 in 2008 and 12 last year, police said.

Employees who sold or provided alcohol to an underage buyer were fined \$735.

A business that violates the law faces a 14-day suspension of its liquor license or a \$500 civil penalty for a first violation; a second violation in two years carries a 30-day license suspension and a \$1,500 civil penalty. The license suspension increases to 60 days for a third violation in three years, plus the \$1,500 penalty; a fourth violation in three years is punished by revocation of the license.

Since 2005, the department has checked each establishment that holds a liquor license once a year.

In 2007, West Des Moines police started a program called the Training for Intervention Procedure(S) to teach servers how to properly evaluate patrons' IDs, how to detect the signs of intoxication and how to intervene effectively while maintaining customer relations.

Additionally, licensees will receive an affirmative defense against a civil penalty if a TIPS-certified employee completes an illegal sale during a police-sponsored alcohol compliance check. Although the affirmative defense may be used to negate a civil penalty on the business, the employee cited is still subject to the criminal penalty associated with the offense.

The city has had 74 businesses with 668 servers attend TIPS training.