Alcohol consumption is a common pastime on campuses across the country. Unlike other more innocent forms of recreation, this one can lead to serious injury and even death. A handful of high-profile cases captures the nation’s attention every year. But most of the alcohol-related claims insurers receive, almost on a daily basis, get little if any coverage on TV or radio or in newspapers. When the bigger cases make the news, the education community, media, community activists, and parents scramble to make sure appropriate policies are in place to combat campus drinking. But when the next sensational story grabs the headlines, the interest in alcohol abuse wanes, except among dedicated campus administrators.

Greater vigilance is needed. No matter what we are doing to ameliorate the frequency and severity of alcohol-related claims, we must do more because the claims continue to come. We need to guard against complacency and the impulse to accept the inevitability of alcohol abuse and its consequences. Parents need to be educated and made partners with school administrators in the effort to reduce alcohol-related casualties. It comes down to this: The few well-publicized claims involving alcohol should not be gawked at as campus aberrations, but regarded instead as akin to the cases that afflict campuses all across the nation.

Our analysis of the types of alcohol-related claims we receive most often tells us that campuses can take steps to reduce the risks.
Types of Claims

According to a recent study, each year 1,400 college students die from alcohol-related unintentional injuries. Additionally, alcohol is involved in 500,000 unintentional injuries, 600,000 assaults, and 70,000 cases of sexual assault and acquaintance rape. Statistics further show that 90 percent of all campus violence is alcohol related. The types of claims reported by educational institutions throughout the country can be broken down as follows: alcohol and its related damage, assault, athletics, automobile, suicide and slip and falls. Not only is alcohol a category in and of itself, but it frequently has an impact on each of the other categories. These are typical of the claims we receive:

• **Alcohol and its related damage:** Alcohol use can lead to situations involving property damage and interaction with campus or local police, sometimes with dire consequences. It is unclear whether alcohol causes aggressive behavior, whether aggressive people tend to use alcohol, or both. Recently a student who had been drinking began banging on what he thought to be his friend’s door. Unfortunately it was someone else’s residence, and the owner called the police, believing someone was trying to break into his home. Upon arriving the police found the student in the backyard, screaming and combative. When they asked him to “freeze,” he lunged at one of the officers who shot and killed him.

Approximately one in three 18-24 year olds who seek emergency room treatment for serious injuries is under the influence of alcohol. Numerous claims are reported with the same basic facts: students go out drinking, one falls asleep only to be found at some point later in time either
comatose or dead from alcohol poisoning. Eventually a claim is brought against the school. The allegations of negligence may include failure to have an adequate alcohol policy, failure to implement an alcohol policy, or lack of appropriate counseling in those cases where the student had been receiving campus counseling.

- **Assaults:** Cases of assault frequently involve alcohol. Sexual encounters and the use of alcohol either involve taking sexual advantage of another or being taken advantage of by someone. Research shows that at least half of sexual assaults among college student are linked to alcohol use. This number could be higher because not all such sexual encounters are reported. Alcohol use among college students often also leads to risky sexual behavior which in turn can lead to unwanted pregnancies as well as sexually transmitted diseases. In one case a young inebriated woman was caught on tape as she made sexual passes at young men. She was so inebriated that on tape she is seen flashing young men and using vulgar sexual language. Following her recorded sexual advances, she claimed she was raped and that it was the college’s fault for failing both to properly supervise her and to implement its own alcohol policies. Both students were sanctioned for violating the institution’s alcohol policy. The alleged victim has filed suit against the college which is currently pending.

In another case a resident advisor at a college went away for a weekend and allowed three friends who were not students at the college to stay in her room. One of these guests got extremely intoxicated. A young man, also a non-student, slipped into the dorm and entered the unlocked room where the young, and very drunk woman was resting. Later, friends arrived and
found the intruder attempting to sexually assault the victim. The victim has no recollection of the assault. Among the many allegations the claim alleges inadequate security.

- **Athletics:** A variety of claims arise out of athletics. Following a 2002 University of Maryland and Duke University basketball game, students became violent and destructive, setting fires and vandalizing the city of College Park, Maryland. Alcohol played a key role. In a separate incident and during the same season when Arizona, Maryland, and Penn State lost the basketball tournament, students and fans went on a destructive rampage. When Purdue’s women’s team lost to Notre Dame, violence erupted. Alcohol played a role in all of these events.

In another claim a number of players on a sports team began drinking alcohol in a hotel while traveling early one afternoon. Later that evening the drinkers decided to pull the fire alarm as a joke. Unfortunately an elderly hotel patron panicked and suffered a heart attack, fortunately one that was not fatal. A claim and later a lawsuit was filed against the educational institution for failure to supervise the students. This claim recently settled.

In one recent claim three non-students near a campus had been drinking. While on campus property they wandered around and reached a lake that had been fenced off and marked with signs that no trespassing was allowed. They climbed the barbed wire fence and jumped in the lake where one of them drowned. To date no claim has been presented.
• **Automobiles:** Although it is well known that alcohol impairs reaction time and concentration, people still drink and drive. Half of all fatal traffic crashes among 18-24 year olds involve alcohol. According to data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, motor vehicle accidents are the leading cause of death for 15-20 year olds. In one recent claim, an inebriated claimant, a non-student, was under a school vehicle late at night when the driver, a student, also an employee of the college, got in and drove away. The driver noticed that the vehicle was difficult to drive and stopped, only to find the severely injured victim. Skin, muscle and bone were ground into the roadway. Many skin grafts have been unsuccessful. It is still unclear why this individual was under the van. He had an extremely high blood alcohol level so in all likelihood he had no idea he where he was, much less that he was under a van. The allegations in the lawsuit include: negligence for failure to keep a proper lookout for pedestrians including the plaintiff under the van; negligent entrustment; premises liability making the argument that there was inadequate lighting in the parking lot; and, vicarious liability given that the student was also an employee.

• **Suicide:** Alcohol is also associated with suicide. The exact nature of the link is not understood, but there are indications that it can vary from one person to the next. For some it might be that alcohol leads to ideas of suicide. In other instances depression can lead to the excessive use of alcohol. In one claim a young man committed suicide by hanging himself in his dorm room. He had been receiving counseling on campus for depression. When he was found numerous empty bottles of liquor were scattered about the room. Just how much alcohol was consumed? Unfortunately the autopsy did not include a blood alcohol analysis which leaves many questions unanswered. While alcohol played a role in this tragedy the exact role it played may never be
fully understood. This matter is currently in litigation and one of the allegations against the school includes inadequate counseling.

- **Slips and Falls:** Numerous claims pertain to college students who fell from heights while under the influence of alcohol. One claim involves a young college couple in a dorm room. During an amorous interlude in the middle of the night they tumbled from the bed and out of a nearby window four stories to the ground, half naked. While they sustained serious internal injuries, both are fortunate to be alive. The two young lovers had been drinking all evening. Empty beer bottles were all over the dorm room. Eventually claims were made alleging that the windows were in disrepair.

Another claim is on behalf of a student who died when he and some friends attempted to find a shortcut to a fraternity party. The student jumped a fence and fell 150 feet into a gorge to his death. Witnesses claim the student had six vodka shots before leaving for the party. Within months of this tragedy a claim was made alleging wrongful death, negligence and premises liability. Note that the fall did not happen on the institution’s property.

Claims can also arise out of an alleged failure to administer an alcohol policy or as in one case, out of allegations that an institution applied its policy more harshly to a particular student. In that case a student alleged that male athletes were treated more favorably by the school than female students in general. The student in question was expelled because she was caught drinking while on probation. She alleged that athletes drank regularly and that their drinking was tolerated and went unpunished by the school. She compared her treatment to an athlete and a first offender as
opposed to someone on probation. This is a good example of a school’s attempt to enforce its alcohol policies in a consistent manner. The student with prior infractions should indeed be sanctioned more severely than the first offender. In the world of claims there are some claims that are more preferable than others. In this instance it is better to get the claim that alleges disparate treatment than the more tragic drunk driving fatality.

**Who’s to Blame**

Although these examples show how risky students’ behavior can be when they drink, it is increasingly common for the students and their parents to claim that schools failed to supervise the youth or provide adequate safeguards against their own recklessness. Parents might point fingers at the institution as a palliative to their own anguish or simply to shift culpability from their children to the school to avoid a financial or emotional responsibility.

The legislative efforts to tighten drunk driving laws gave some of us hope that society was ready to hold individuals personally responsible for their conduct. Many of us thought that placing responsibility where it belonged would translate into a reluctance to bring educational institutions in as defendants. Claim trends do not reflect this. It is one thing for legislators to hold drinkers responsible and quite another to see claims cross our desks every day.

Once we hear about an incident, it is only a matter of time before blame is placed on the college or university. Although juries are generally unsympathetic to drinkers who cause damage or injury, their perspective is different with college students. Juries are frequently willing to
overlook personal responsibility when faced with a college student who is maimed or whose life has been prematurely ended, even if the student had been drinking.

**A Societal Problem**

A 2002 report by the Task Force on College Drinking of the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) found that heavy drinking is interwoven in the culture of our colleges and universities. Drinking is seen as the norm. The following synopsis of the report is from the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention:

The task group, comprised of alcohol researchers, education administrators and college students, found that customs and traditions, alcohol industry marketing and lax enforcement of policies and laws contribute to the high level of drinking we have today on our college campuses. The task force recommends attacking this issue on three levels: (1) with the entire student body, (2) in the broader college and community environment and (3) with the at-risk individual student. In order to tackle environmental factors contributing to the problem, interaction with the entire student body entails changing (a) the availability of alcohol; (b) the aggressive marketing of alcohol to students; (c) addressing excessive unstructured free time for students; (d) being consistent in the publication and dissemination of laws and policies along with their strict enforcement, and (e) changing students’ perceptions that high-risk drinking is the norm. 

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Forging the commitment and support of neighboring communities is also critical. The task force suggests that this relationship will only be effective when the community recognizes that student drinking can ultimately have an impact on communities.

In order to target and address alcohol use with individual students the group suggests offering screening and intervention services. It suggests using health center or emergency room visits as possible venues for identifying the at-risk students. When falls, assaults or other alcohol related issues arise it makes it easy to identify these students in crisis. The task force recommends the following strategies:

- Increase enforcement of the minimum drinking age laws.
- Offer “safe rides” programs.
- Regulate cheap liquor promotions and happy hours.
- Limit the density of alcohol outlets.
- Raise taxes on alcohol beverages.
- Create and enforce policies on the responsible service of alcoholic beverages.
- Form a campus and community coalition.
- Correct student misperceptions about alcohol use through marketing campaigns.

Students do not adequately perceive the dangers of alcohol abuse. Although students’ under-appreciation of alcohol abuse is the principal factor that leads to student binge drinking, there are others: genetic predisposition, family background, value systems, and marketing targeted to
students, such as nearby campus bars offering reduced price drinks. Drinking is seen as an easy way of integrating with others socially, especially when it is a student’s first time away from home. Moreover, students see themselves as being invincible. They take drinking and its possible risks for granted thinking that nothing can possibly happen to them.

**Possible Approaches**

There is much that you can do to minimize the risks associated with alcohol abuse and protect your institutions from liability.

The first step is to establish a sound policy that specifies the ground rules and lists specific punitive measures in the event the policy is violated. It is highly advisable to get legal counsel’s assistance in drafting a policy. Most important, put the policy in writing. The second step is to enforce your policy. It is also important to publicize the policy to students and parents at orientation, in residence halls, and on the web.

As you craft your policy or review your current one, consider the characteristics of campus life and alcohol use that may affect campus drinking, for example:

- Recognize that incoming freshmen’s first six weeks on campus are a critical time for administrators to reach these students. Consider targeting some of your alcohol policies toward them. This period might be the first time a student encounters alcohol. Heavy drinking early on could lead to continued drinking throughout the student’s college career and this in turn could adversely affect the student’s entire college experience including campus life, grades, and the ability to complete a course of studies.
• Know that colleges with fraternities and sororities that place a lot of emphasis on athletics typically have higher rates of alcohol use.

• Know your own campus as well as the surrounding community. Monitor trends on your campus so you can effectively target factors that contribute to student drinking. Your policy needs to consider the multiple factors that lead to drinking.

• Include students in policy making. When students embrace a policy and take ownership of it, the policy is much more likely to be effective.

• Disciplinary actions need to be progressive. A student with a first-time infraction should be dealt with less severely than one with a third infraction. Similarly, consistent enforcement of age 21 laws on campuses is critical in helping to decrease alcohol consumption.

• Know that alcohol use by students not only has a direct correlation to students’ well-being but is also directly correlated to colleges’ costs from damage to the physical plant as well as tort claims.

• Know that there is going to be more drinking in dorms and Greek houses than in off-campus housing; among students with substantial amounts of unstructured time; among
white students than African Americans; and alcohol use tends to be the highest in the Northeast and North Central regions of the country.

- Consider using media campaigns to help change perceptions about alcohol, as they helped change views on smoking over the past 30 years. Counter-advertising, which casts doubt on an industry’s credibility and its messages, has had a tremendous effect in turning people against smoking and decreasing the number of smokers dramatically. Media campaigns on campuses can include the use of posters, flyers, email messages, and college newspapers. One or more popular spokesperson can also be useful in delivering the anti-drinking message. For instance, a popular member of the Greek community could be used to target the message to fraternities and sororities.

- Know that peers have the greatest effect on student norms. According to the “social norms approach,” when peers encourage drinking, actual consumption increases. The “social norms approach” entails communicating actual student norms to dispel myths. Again, this approach is just another piece of the puzzle in targeting alcohol use.

- Educate parents and students. Apprise them of campus policy, the state’s alcohol policies, and the community’s alcohol policies.

- Consider the addition of non-alcoholic activities on campus to lure students from off-campus bars and parties.
Think of these ideas as you assess your policies on alcohol use. Consider, too, the potential consequences of alcohol use— injury, death, psychological trauma, emotional pain to the victims and the campus community, and even the cost of litigation. College drinking affects numerous lives on our campuses every day. I hope you will review your policies with a great sense of urgency because the consequences can be so great.
Sexual Assault and Substance Abuse: Partners in Crime

Government reports reveal two frightening facts about campus life:

- Nearly 4,000 forcible and more than 1,500 nonforcible sexual assaults occurred on or around campuses in 2000, according to the Department of Education.
- About 40 percent of college students binge drink, a National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) task force found.

At first glance these may seem to be separate problems, but more and more educational institutions are coming to understand that the two are linked. Most campus sexual assaults involve alcohol or other drugs. Alcohol is used most widely, having been consumed by the perpetrator, the victim, or both in at least half the sexual assaults on campus, according to an article in the *National Institute Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) Journal*. Another study found alcohol implicated in up to 75 percent of date rapes of college-age women.

Effective preventive programs address sexual assault and substance abuse as a linked problem. These programs may start in the early years of dating so young people can develop realistic views of drugs, alcohol, and sex.

Students’ Perceptions
Many student victims and perpetrators perceive a link between substance abuse and sexual assault. Often male assailants blame alcohol for the assault. One college student said, “Alcohol loosened us up and the situation occurred by accident. If no alcohol was consumed, I would never have crossed that line.”

Similarly, some college women say alcohol made them take chances they would not ordinarily take, such as letting a drunk man into their apartments.

Alcohol may be an excuse, but it may also be part of a plan. Some men said they got women drunk so it would be harder for them to resist. For perpetrators, being under the influence may remove both physical and psychological inhibitors of aggression.

Misinterpretation was at the heart of some attacks. Men may consider women who drink to be sexually promiscuous and appropriate targets for sexual assault. And some college women think their behavior while drinking gave their attacker the wrong idea. “Alcohol put me in the mood for petting, kissing, holding, and hugging, and he may have interpreted that as going further with sexual activity.”

In spite of the apparent link, some institutions prefer keeping programs on substance abuse separate from those on sexual assault. Their program coordinators explain that victimizers abuse while drunk but premeditate while sober. They recommend providing separate rape counseling that emphasizes the use of dominance, not alcohol, during attacks.

Even campus prevention programs that acknowledge a link often target drug and alcohol use in one program and sexual assault in another. By missing the connection between the two problems, they may not be taking the most effective approach to reducing either. Most programs on substance abuse do not currently stress the risk of sexual assault, and most rape-prevention programs don’t emphasize alcohol as a risk factor.

**Need for Coordination**
A coordinated campus approach in which experts on substance abuse and sexual assault work together could make those connections, dispelling students’ misconceptions about alcohol and assault and reducing the risk of both. This kind of approach is called for in the Higher Education Center’s publication *Preventing Alcohol-Related Problems on Campus: Acquaintance Rape* (online at http://www.edc.org/hec/pubs/acqrape.html#2c). It says that only with a multi-pronged campaign “involving all elements of the campus in repeated and mutually enforcing exposure…will a critical mass of students, faculty, and staff come to share a common view about the total unacceptability of binge drinking and sexual assault. And only then will these behaviors decline significantly.”

Effective programs that combine the two use a variety of approaches and activities, involve many stakeholders, including students, faculty, and administrators, and reach every student more than once. Institutions may choose to hold student discussions during orientation; workshops in residence halls, fraternities, and sororities; peer-education sessions for athletes, who commit a disproportionate number of acquaintance rapes on some campuses; and special sessions for faculty, who may then incorporate the information in classes. Programs may also take place during theme weeks to raise the campus’s awareness of the issues. Approaches include:

- Mandatory rape-prevention workshops in residence halls several times a year for first-year students.
- Peer-run meetings on alcohol and acquaintance rape.
- Presentations designed to increase attendance by promoting them as covering “sex,” not “rape.” Programs may incorporate humor, videos, role playing, and coed discussions.
- Mandatory rape-prevention education as part of coursework for varsity athletes.
- Workshops for faculty in sociology, psychology, and health education with information to include in their courses.
- Awareness week with activities such as videos highlighting the substance-abuse-and-sexual-assault connection and interactive workshops focusing on dating attitudes and the meaning of “no.”
- Workshops for faculty and staff about behavioral indicators, student norms, and cultural attitudes related to high-risk or illegal alcohol and other drug use.
A program could provide information on the following:

- The role alcohol and drugs play in increasing the risk of sexual assault and how changes in behavior can lead to risk reduction.
- The occurrence of drug- and alcohol-related sexual assault on campuses.
- The educational institution’s policy on sexual assault and the actions it takes toward the assailant.
- The misconception that alcohol and drug use are acceptable excuses for sexual assault.
- The negative consequences of alcohol and drug use, with an emphasis on sexual consequences.
- The right to say “no” to sex at any time.
- The potential legal consequences of committing sexual assault.

Whatever approach your campus takes, try to involve as many administrators, faculty, and students as possible. Broad coordination gets students speaking about the link between sexual assault and substance abuse. Ultimately it may influence them to change their behavior.

**Resources**

“Alcohol-Related Sexual Assault: A Common Problem among College Students,” by Antonia Abbey, in *Journal of Studies on Alcohol.*


*Preventing Alcohol-Related Problems on Campus: Acquaintance Rape,* by Peter Finn, from the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention.
http://www.edc.org/hec/violence/

We welcome your suggestions of safety concerns that you would like to see UE address. Contact us at risk@ue.org. For more information about UE, its services, and its policies, please visit our website at www.ue.org.

You may also access all the issues of UE Safety Dispatch through our Members Only Library at the UE website. If you do not currently have a username and password, go to www.ue.org and click the “Members Only Library” button. Choose “Click here to register” on the right and complete the online form. Past Safety Dispatches have covered many topics, including athletics safety, crisis planning, alcohol and drug abuse, and dorm safety.
January 2002

**Energy Drinks and Students: A Potentially Dangerous Mix**

College students and teens are guzzling energy drinks for a high-energy boost, and they’re getting sick in the process. With sales in the millions, drinks like Red Bull, Venom, KMX, 180, and Adrenaline Rush are the latest pick-me-up of choice. Students drink them to get through all-night study sessions and, mixing them with vodka, to party longer. Student athletes down them to boost performance. But these beverages are different from carbohydrate-rich sports drinks, like Gatorade or Powerade. The younger generations’ new chosen libation may be dangerous to their health.

**What are energy drinks?**
Energy drinks are a breed of concoctions with stiff doses of caffeine and sugar and a blend of herbs and other legal stimulants, including ephedrine, guarana, taurine, and ginseng (see “Definitions”). After gaining popularity for several years in Europe, these drinks arrived in this country in the late 1990s.

Since then, marketing campaigns have primarily targeted people up to age 30 in slick advertisements that tout benefits like physical endurance, mental alertness, and improved well-being. The sales pitch has strong appeal to youth, who are proving to be the main consumers.

For young partygoers on both U.S. coasts, a mixture of vodka and an energy drink has been all the rage. The combination is now becoming popular with students in Middle America. The appeal seems to be the promise of a sustained rush that allows them to drink longer into the night and combat hangovers.

**What are the risks?**
Doctors, nutritionists, and scientists in this country and abroad are concerned that the products alone or in combination with alcohol may cause significant problems. They caution that students should be skeptical of the claims of health benefits and mindful of the potential health risks.

Since energy drinks are loaded with caffeine and sugar, they may be more harmful than beneficial to athletes who consume them during or after exercise. The combination of caffeine and sugar slows the body's ability to absorb water, which can cause dehydration. One death in Sweden is attributed to consumption of an energy drink following intense exercise.
The mixture of alcohol, a depressant, and caffeine, a stimulant, presents further risks. At least one energy drink is made with 5 percent alcohol, and students may create their own cocktails. Adverse effects of the alcohol-caffeine mix can include dehydration, insomnia, headaches, nervousness, nosebleeds, and vomiting. For students who have underlying medical conditions, such as high blood pressure and other heart-related ailments, the potential risks include cardiopulmonary and cardiovascular failure.

The stimulating effects of energy drinks may also give students a false sense of alertness. Feeling up, they may drink more alcohol than they ordinarily would and then drive or engage in other activities that they can’t handle. Two deaths in Sweden are attributed to mixing a popular energy drink with vodka, and deaths in Ireland, England, and Australia have also been linked to energy drinks. Indications are that the people died of dehydration.

Excessive alcohol consumption may cause a person to pass out. As unfortunate as that may be, it can sometimes have the positive result of preventing alcohol poisoning. A heavy drinker who remains alert and overstimulated can more easily end up with a blood alcohol level that has been raised to toxic levels.

Some nations take action
Officials in some countries have issued warnings about the risks associated with energy drinks. The Swedish National Food Administration recommends against consuming energy drinks after exercise and mixing the drinks with alcohol. The Australian Food and Drug Administration requires that energy drinks have a warning label saying, “This food is not recommended for children, pregnant or lactating women and individuals sensitive to caffeine.”

In the United States, energy drinks do not fall under the purview of the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and carry no warning labels. Because the FDA does not have the authority to regulate herbal supplements, the beverage labels are free to make unsubstantiated claims – and to entice people to drink more of them.

Oversight has come from a few sports organizations that do not permit specific stimulants found in some energy drinks. The National Collegiate Athletic Association, the International Olympic Committee, and the National Football League, for example, ban ephedrine, an ingredient in some energy drinks.

Some pointers for institutions
The following recommendations on ways to include energy drinks in your drug prevention efforts come from the Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, in Newton, Massachusetts.

Creating a Social, Academic, and Residential Environment That Promotes Healthy Social Norms
- Survey students to determine the prevalence of ephedrine and the consumption of energy drinks on campus.
- Develop social norms marketing campaigns to address any exaggerated misperceptions of ephedrine and energy drinks.
• Educate students and athletes about the potential risks of taking ephedrine-containing products or consuming energy drinks after exercise or mixed with alcohol.

**Enforcing Campus Policy and State and Local Laws**
• Revise campus alcohol and other drug policies as necessary. Consider banning the use of energy drinks during athletic competition and training.
• Communicate campus alcohol and other drug policies clearly and frequently to the community, including possible consequences for violations.

**Limiting Availability and Access**
• Utilize campus and community coalitions to discourage or prohibit the sale of such products on and near campus.
• Work with local bars and nightclubs to discourage mixing energy drinks with alcohol.

**Restricting Marketing and Promotion**
• Consider prohibiting on-campus advertising of energy drinks that contain herbal supplements.
• Work with campus and community coalitions to restrict promotions in the community that advertise these products.
• Work with law enforcement to address and investigate promotions on campus and in the surrounding community.

**Some helpful tips for students**
Consider distributing the facts on energy drinks straight to students. Here are some ideas.
• *Stay hydrated.* Avoid using energy drinks solely for the purpose of hydrating or quenching a thirst. Drink plenty of water and take occasional breaks during exercise. Dehydration can lead to accidents by causing progressive loss of coordination and inability to concentrate and can predispose one to various ailments such as heat illness, hypothermia, or frostbite. It's vital to stay hydrated.

• *Avoid mixing energy drinks with alcohol.* Like other stimulants, these drinks can cause serious, and potentially fatal, health problems when taken with depressants. The effects of mixing a stimulant with a depressant such as alcohol, which has a tranquilizing effect, may prevent you from realizing how intoxicated you really are. If you are planning on mixing energy drinks with alcohol, limit yourself to one mixed drink per evening. You can decrease the negative effects of alcohol and stay hydrated by alternating nonalcoholic and alcoholic beverages. Just don’t overdo. Drink in moderation.

• *Get sufficient rest.* Energy drinks can’t replace the benefits of adequate rest, and they can trick your body into thinking you’re not as drunk as you really are. Fatigue is the body’s way of saying it has had enough to drink, and it’s dangerous to ignore the signal. National Institute of Health sleep experts believe people should get somewhere between seven and eight hours of sleep each night. This figure varies considerably with age and from person to person. Still, if you’re regularly getting fewer than six hours of sleep per night, the chances
are that you're building up your "sleep debt" and you may be compromising your health and welfare.

- **Eat regularly and don't skip meals.** Make sure you have eaten enough during the day to fuel your activities. Energy drinks don’t substitute for a meal.

**Definitions**

**Ephedrine:** Widely used for weight loss, as an energy booster, and to enhance athletic performance. Products containing ephedrine often contain other stimulants, such as caffeine, which may have energizing effects and increase the potential for adverse effects, such as headaches, insomnia, tremors, nerve damage, rapid or irregular heartbeat, high blood pressure, hypertension, strokes, heart attacks, seizures, brain damage, and death. Ephedrine is often touted as the “herbal fen-phen.” The FDA does not regulate it.

**Ginseng:** A Chinese herb that is believed to stimulate mental and physical activity.

**Guarana:** An herb that grows in the Amazon jungle of South America. Traditionally guarana was used in herbal teas in Brazil, and it is still widely used in drinks. Manufacturers grind the seeds of the guarana plant and add them to energy drinks. Its effects are similar to those of caffeine.

**Taurine:** Taurine is a naturally occurring amino acid, one of the building blocks of protein. After glutamine, taurine is the second most abundant amino acid in the muscle amino acid pool. All kinds of stress (especially exercise) deplete taurine, and the body may not be able to keep up production.

**Resources**
The following articles provide further information on energy drinks and their effects on the body:

**Ball State University**
www.bsu.edu/news/article/0,1513,7273~4557~850,00.html

**Facts on Tap**
“Energy Drink/Alcohol Combo Dangerous.” www.factsontap.org/whatsnew/Whatsnew.htm

**The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention**

**InteliHealth**
“Energy Drinks Winning Fans at Bars.”
www.intelihealth.com/IH/iHtIH/WSIHW000/333/344/326298.html

**Los Angeles Daily News**
“The Other Energy Crisis: ‘Healthy’ Drinks Just Low-Dose Speed.”
199.97.97.16/contWriter/yhdweek/2001/10/16/medic/7451-0030-pat_nytimes.html
General information about drug and alcohol prevention is available at the following Web sites:

The American College Health Association: www.acha.org

The Department of Health and Human Services, SAMHSA's National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information: www.health.org

Facts on Tap: www.factsontap.org

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention: www.edc.org/hec

For questions about nutritional supplements, visit the National Center for Drug Free Sport Resource Exchange Center (REC) Web site at www.drugfreesport.com.

We welcome your suggestions of safety concerns that you would like to see addressed in UE’s Safety Dispatch, a roundtable discussion, or other format. You can contact Pam Rypkema, Risk Management Consultant, at prypkema@ue.org, 301-215-6401; M.J. Johnston, Risk Management Specialist, at mjjohnston@ue.org, 301-215-8478; or Kim Nimmo, Risk Management Specialist, at knimmo@ue.org, 301-215-6403; or fax to 301-907-4830. If you would like additional information about UE, its services and policies, please visit our Web site at www.ue.org.

You may also access the following previous issues of UE Safety Dispatch through our “Members Only” Web site. If you do not currently have a username and password, go to www.ue.org and click the “Members Only” button. Then choose the “Register?” button to gain access to the site.

- I’ll Have a Blue Christmas
- The Risk Management Committee: A Recipe for Success
- Binge Drinking: Not a Rite of Passage
- Fifteen-Passenger Vans: A Moving Issue
- Heat Strokes: The Deadly Side of Summer
- Additional Insured Endorsements: Protection Through Your Vendors’ Insurance
- Risk Management Branches Out: Care for Campus Trees
- Falling Down at Commencement: Preventing Slips and Falls
- A Striking Risk: Lightning on Campus
- Diving Risks: Getting in Over Your Head
- New Year’s Resolutions
- When the Lights Go Out! Power Outages on Campus
- Safe and Speedy Evacuations
- 10 Steps to Crisis Management Planning
- Mosh Pits: The Risk Management Options
- Focus on Fitness Center Safety
- Holiday Safety Tips
- Bon Voyage to Boating Risks
• Nailing Down Construction Safety
• Soccer: The Goal is Safety
• Dorm Fires/Life Safety (Inaugural Issue)