



# Washington Regional Threat and Analysis Center

2720 Martin Luther King, Jr. Avenue, S.E., Washington, D.C. 20032  
wrtac@dc.gov  
202-481-3007, 202-563-2768 (Fax)



<b>TITLE</b> Alcohol Energy Drinks	<b>SERIES NUMBER</b> 2010-299
<b>October 29, 2010</b>	<b>School Resource Personnel</b>

**Purpose and Scope:** Provide school resource personnel information and implications of the national alcohol energy drink trend.

### Key Points:

- Alcohol energy drinks such as Four Loko are marketed to look like nonalcoholic energy drinks.
- Alcohol energy drinks are popular with college students because one can contains the equivalent of five alcoholic beverages and one shot of espresso for an average cost of \$2.50.
- Nationally, there have been approximately 30 students hospitalized due to alcohol poisoning linked to the consumption of alcoholic energy drinks.

### Background:

Recently, alcoholic energy drinks have been making national headlines related to multiple hospitalizations for alcohol poisoning among college students. These hospitalizations have resulted in several universities banning the alcoholic energy drinks from campuses. Lawmakers in several states, including New York, have sought to ban the drinks, though no legislation has passed yet.

These drinks mix alcohol with caffeine. Alcoholic energy products are marketed to look like energy drinks on grocery shelves, but can pack a real alcoholic punch. Four Loko is a popular brand, but not the only alcoholic energy drink under scrutiny. In the case of Four Loko, the 23.5-ounce drink is 12 percent alcohol and roughly equivalent to drinking five 12-ounce beers. The drink also has about a cup's worth of coffee, according to the manufacturer.

There's a very common misconception that if you drink caffeine with an alcoholic beverage the stimulant effect of the caffeine counteracts the depressant effect of the alcohol and that is not true.



Four Loko and other caffeinated alcoholic drinks under FDA scrutiny. (CBS)

**Binge Drinking:** Statistics from the CDC show that roughly 90 percent of alcohol consumed by people under the age of 21 in the U.S. is in the form of binge drinking. Binge drinking is defined as a pattern of drinking that brings a person's blood alcohol concentration to .08 or above, which is typically equivalent to five or more drinks for men and four or more drinks for women within the span of two hours.

**Alcohol Poisoning:** Alcohol poisoning is one of the greatest dangers of binge drinking. It is a serious condition resulting from too high a concentration of alcohol in the blood. Symptoms include severe vomiting, depressed respirations, and seizures. It can result in coma and even death. Alcohol poisoning requires medical attention and often requires hospitalization in order to stabilize and monitor the patient.

### **Student Hospitalizations:**

Over the past 2 months, the following hospitalizations are linked to alcohol poisoning due to consumption of alcoholic energy drinks:

- 9 Ellensburg college students in Washington state
- 17 New Jersey's Ramapo College students
- 4 White Plains, NY, teenagers

### **Preventing Binge Drinking:**

Binge drinking statistics tell us that the following interventions help to reduce the incidence of binge drinking:

- Reduce access to alcohol on college campus by having fewer stores selling alcohol nearby.
- Education by high schools and colleges about the dangers of binge drinking.
- Physician screening, counseling, and referral for treatment of alcohol problems.

### **Sources:**

1. Binge Drinking Statistics <http://www.learn-about-alcoholism.com/binge-drinking-statistics.html>
2. Four Loko in Danger of Becoming For Loco 'Blackout' Brand (Updated) <http://www.brandchannel.com/home/post/2010/10/27/Four-Loko-Delivers-On-Blackout-Brand-Promise.aspx>
3. Alcoholic Beverages: FDA Asked Four Loko, Others to Prove Drinks are Safe [http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504763\\_162-20020858-10391704.html](http://www.cbsnews.com/8301-504763_162-20020858-10391704.html)
4. New Jersey College Bans Alcoholic Energy Drinks <http://www.citytowninfo.com/career-and-education-news/articles/new-jersey-college-bans-alcoholic-energy-drinks-10101802>
5. One in four binge drink, number higher at ISU [http://www.videtteonline.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=32955:one-in-four-binge-drink-number-higher-at-isu&catid=35:news&Itemid=53](http://www.videtteonline.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=32955:one-in-four-binge-drink-number-higher-at-isu&catid=35:news&Itemid=53)



**About the WRTAC:** The Washington Regional Threat & Analysis Center is the District of Columbia's fusion center. The WRTAC was formed in 2007 in order to facilitate prevention, response, and mitigation to criminal and terrorist activities, as well as man-made and/or natural disasters by collecting, analyzing, and disseminating diverse intelligence information and intelligence products.

The WRTAC supports multidisciplinary, proactive, risk-based, and community-focused problem solving. The WRTAC provides a continuous flow of information and intelligence to officials to assist in developing a depiction of evolving threats and mitigation strategies.