

Underage Drinking — Know the Law

by Al Vita, Chair, Security Committee

If you are a parent who is thinking about providing or allowing alcohol at a party in your home, you should know the law. Virginia law recognizes the parents' liability for negligence if alcohol is provided to a minor who causes injury to himself or another. Parents can be sued to pay damages if a partygoer or third-party is injured. Parents may also face criminal charges of contributing to the delinquency of a minor. The use of alcohol compromises your teen's safety and opens them and you to legal consequences. Below are the key provisions of the Virginia law:

- Consuming or possessing alcohol under the age of 21 is illegal in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
- Virginia's Zero Tolerance Law makes driving under the influence of any amount of alcohol a serious criminal offense for drivers under age 21.
- No one may use an altered or fake ID, such as a driver's license, birth certificate or student ID card to establish a false identify or false age to purchase an alcoholic beverage.
- Violators of the above laws are guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor which carries a fine of up to \$2500 and/or a year in jail and/or fifty hours of community service and can lose their driver's license for up to a year.