



Media Release

Western Australia Police Service

Police Media Ph: (08) 9222 1217 (08) 9222 1701 (08) 9222 1853
Fax: (08) 9222 1703 Pager: (08) 9480 5311 E-Mail: Media.Section@police.wa.gov.au

Drink Spiking – Forensic results

Preliminary forensic tests conducted by the Chemistry Centre (WA) on 44 cases of alleged drink spiking have been released. The cases were obtained during a special operation conducted between June 2002 and February 2003.

“To date alcohol has been the only significant agent detected. Central nervous system (CNS) depressants normally associated with drink spiking, such as GHB, ketamine and benzodiazepines, have not been encountered,” said Principal Chemist, Robert Hansson of the Forensic Science Laboratory.

“Our results indicated that alcohol was detected in 75% of cases and, alarmingly, the blood alcohol concentration (BAC) exceeded 0.15% in 31% of all cases.”

“In the majority of cases, the BAC was significantly higher than anticipated based upon the victim’s self-assessment of alcohol consumption,” said Mr Hansson

This suggests alcohol may be the principal agent in drink spiking or, that victims are underestimating the effects of alcohol and the amounts consumed. For instance, several brands of sweet tasting alcoholic sodas are equivalent to between 1.6 and 2.7 standard drinks in the one bottle.

Cannabis (3 cases), methylamphetamine (3 cases), amphetamine (1 case) and Ecstasy (1 case) were detected in the 44 cases. Cannabis is not a drink spiking agent and amphetamines, being CNS stimulants, would not be employed where the aim is to sedate a victim. Analysis of suspect drinks also tested negative for common drugs including GHB.

“GHB however is rapidly excreted from the body and the Laboratory remains vigilant in targeting this drug” said Robert Hansson

Police advise that the use of alcohol to ‘stupefy’ is just as much an offence as using other drugs. “It is the ‘intent’, not the agent that is the issue here” said A/Snr Sgt Gill Wilson of the WA Police Alcohol and Drug Co-ordination Unit.

To aid with the detection of drugs it is imperative that victims report as soon as possible, preferably within 12 hours, so that blood and urine samples can be taken. Victims may report to:

- Police, or
- the Emergency Department at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (where a drink spiking investigation project is currently being conducted).

Ongoing collaboration between the WA Police, Chemistry Centre, SCGH Emergency Department and the Sexual Assault Referral Centre (SARC) will continue.

visit our recruiting website: www.police.wa.gov.au



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To avoid becoming a victim of drink spiking:

- know how much you are drinking
- know what you are drinking
- never leave your drink unattended
- don't let strangers buy you a drink
- watch out for your friends.

Ends release.

Further contacts: Robert Hansson, Forensic Science Laboratory, Chemistry Centre (WA)

A/Snr Sgt Gill Wilson, Alcohol & Drug Co-ordination Unit, WAPS

MIKE GOUGH
SERGEANT
POLICE MEDIA
17 JULY 2003.

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