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State Imposes Stiff Penalties on Liquor Establishments for Over-Serving in Fatal Crash Cases

Fines and Liquor License Suspensions Hold Establishments Accountable for Liquor Law Violations

Santa Fe - The New Mexico Regulation and Licensing Department's Alcohol and Gaming Division (AGD) today announced strong administrative penalties for two New Mexico establishments that over-served alcohol to patrons who went on to cause fatal drunk driving crashes. The two establishments, Blue Corn Café and Brewery in Santa Fe and El Alto Bar and Station in Las Vegas, have been fined and their liquor licenses suspended.

Blue Corn Café and Brewery in Santa Fe has been fined the maximum \$10,000, and had their liquor license suspended for 15 days, spanning over two weekends, after pleading no contest to over-serving an intoxicated man who then caused a fatal crash, killing two teenage girls and severely injuring family members and bystanders. The driver is serving a 40-year sentence at Western New Mexico Correctional Facility in Grants, and a civil lawsuit in the case has been settled.

El Alto Bar and Station in Las Vegas paid a \$2,500 fine and ceased serving alcohol for eight consecutive days in response to an administrative citation issued for over-serving a customer who caused a fatal crash while intoxicated in March of 2010. After leaving the El Alto Bar, the intoxicated person hit another car, killing himself and an innocent 18-year-old girl returning home from college.

“These establishments violated the terms of their liquor licenses,” said AGD Director Jennifer Anderson. “A suspension of a liquor license is a significant consequence for a business, and these administrative penalties send a strong message that putting New Mexicans at risk by contributing to drunk driving will not be tolerated in New Mexico.”

While fines have been capped in the past against such offending establishments between \$5,000 and \$6,000 with little to no suspension of the license, the Alcohol and Gaming Division has stepped up enforcement. Six cases for over-

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service that resulted in fatalities have been set for hearings, and four have already been resolved with fines ranging from \$2,500 to \$11,000, depending on the facts of the case. In addition to these heavy administrative fines, AGD has also required the suspension of liquor licenses at offending establishments, particularly over weekend days, when alcohol sales are high.

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