

# ALCOHOL JUSTICE™

The Industry Watchdog

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## 7-Eleven Threatens Children with Supersized Alcopop Bargains



SAN FRANCISCO, CA (May 16, 2012) – Alcohol Justice, the U.S.-based industry watchdog, released a new report today showing convenience store giant 7-Eleven cuts prices on supersized, youth-attractive alcopops so they are cheaper than non-alcoholic energy drinks. While on average, alcopops were the same price per standard alcoholic drink as beer, supersized alcopops in 16- to 24-ounce cans were cheaper per standard drink than similarly sized beer. Some supersized alcopops, such as Four Loko and Mike’s Harder Lemonade, entice youth with more alcohol for the price than even similar sized malt liquor.

*“Alcopops are just too good of a deal for kids to pass up,”* said Holley Shafer, research analyst at Alcohol Justice and co-author of the new report, **“Alcopops Cheaper than Energy Drinks: 7-Eleven Gambles with Children’s Lives.”** Alcohol Justice surveyed all 7-Eleven stores in northern California’s Marin County, an area plagued with excessive youth alcohol consumption. *“The availability of cheap single-serving supersized alcopops like Four Loko at 7-Eleven stores makes them even more compelling to youth than comparable non-alcoholic energy drinks,”* added Shafer, *“because young people already seeking the energy drink buzz are a vulnerable market for energy drinks’ alcoholic cousins, alcopops.”*

Alcopops, legally referred to as “flavored malt beverages” (FMBs) in most states, appeal to youth through cheap price, image, alcohol content, and taste. Alcopops are often the first drink for teenagers, as one-third of teenage girls ages 12 to 18 and one-fifth of teenage boys have tried an alcopops product. The industry markets alcopop products specifically to teens and youth, using the sickly sweet, bubbly “transitional beverages” to hook them on alcohol early, and secure customers for life.

*“Kids go into 7-Eleven and see alcopops as cheaper liquid refreshment than energy drinks that look and taste the same,”* stated report co-author, Bruce Lee Livingston, Executive Director/CEO of Alcohol Justice. *“Kids hear that alcopops taste sweeter than beer or malt liquor, and calculate that the supersized cans will get them drunker for less. We think 7-Eleven uses alcopops as loss leaders, but it results in the loss of future leaders.”*

The report states that as part of the youth marketing strategy, alcopops are packaged and marketed similarly to non-alcoholic energy drinks. For example, hip-hop/rap music artist Snoop Dogg is the celebrity spokesperson for Monster as well as Blast. Snoop Dogg's promotional videos for both products are accessible to viewers of all ages on social media sites such as YouTube and Twitter. This heavy-handed marketing and packaging obviously targets underage energy drink consumers. The ads are clear—drinking Monster is cool, but drinking Blast elevates the drinker to pimp status.

*“Alcopop producers have been wildly successful in marketing cheap alcopops to youth, while they consistently deny underage consumption or sales to minors,”* says Livingston. *“I suspect 7-Eleven franchises throughout the country, as well as other retailers, offer similar youth-attractive price breaks.”* Alcohol Justice recommends youth and public health groups throughout the United States form Alcopop-Free Zone™ coalitions to demand that retailers voluntarily stop selling youth-attractive alcopops. The Alcopop-Free Zone™ Marin coalition will approach 7-Eleven in force on April 18, to demand they stop selling all alcopops.

The report's key findings are:

- Supersized alcopops were priced cheaper per fluid ounce than non-alcoholic energy drinks. For example, supersized Mike's Harder Lemonade was cheaper per fluid ounce than Rock Star or Monster, and far cheaper than Red Bull.
- On average, alcopops were the same price per standard alcohol drink as beer, but supersized alcopops were priced cheaper per standard drink than beer. At 16 or 24 ounces, Sparks, Mike's, Blast, Joose, Four Loko and Jeremiah Weed provided more ethyl alcohol for the price than beer of the same size – while the alcopops also packed 2.5 to 5 standard drinks per single-serving, chilled container.
- Some supersized alcopops were cheaper per standard drink than any malt liquor. Sickly sweet Four Loko (23.5-oz can, 12% alcohol), at 2 cans for \$5, was \$0.53 per standard drink — cheaper by 3 cents/drink than 40-oz rotgut Steel Reserve.

This local market study of one franchise could be an indicator to federal regulators of a national problem. *“We hope the Federal Trade Commission takes note of the unhealthy cut-rate Four Loko prices and withdraws their proposal to allow the product's producer Phusion Projects, Inc. to keep supersized alcopops on the market,”* concluded Shafer. *“We think the marketing, flavoring, and pricing of alcopops is false advertising. It is meant to trick youth into thinking the products are safe and just cheaper forms of energy drinks.”*

**To read the complete study and list of recommendations, go to [www.AlcoholJustice.org](http://www.AlcoholJustice.org)**

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