

WARNINGS OVER DANGEROUS VODKA AND WHISKY

North Yorkshire County Council Trading Standards and Regulatory Services Officers are advising traders and consumers to be vigilant when purchasing unusual brands of vodka. The Food Standards Agency have issued an alert regarding the recent sale of two vodkas sold under the brand names - S. Petersburg and St. Petersburg - which were contaminated with unacceptably high levels of methanol. These products could cause serious harm to the health of anyone who drinks them.

The effects of methanol poisoning include abdominal pain, drowsiness and dizziness. In serious cases it can cause blurred vision, blindness and breathing difficulties leading to coma.

The S. Petersburg Vodka bottles are 70 cl clear glass bottles with a white label. The label also has a gold crown with crossed swords and two red lions at the top, above the name S. Petersburg Vodka which is in black and red lettering. The other brand St. Petersburg Vodka comes in 1 litre bottles and is otherwise identical except for the deviation in the spelling of the name.

North Yorkshire Trading Standards and Regulatory Services are advising traders and consumers to only purchase their spirit drinks such as Vodka from reputable outlets.

Graham Venn, Assistant Head of North Yorkshire Trading Standards, said: *"Anyone finding they have purchased S. Petersburg or St. Petersburg Vodka or who has been approached by anyone trying to sell such brands, should contact: - Rob Blacklock of the North Yorkshire Trading Standards Food Control Unit, on 01609 768642.*

Chamber members are also reminded of Security Alert No. 4 - Warning of Dangerous Fake Whisky.

(The essential text of Security Alert No. 4 issued on 14/04/03 is copied below for ready reference)

Fake Johnnie Walker Black Label whisky has been contaminated with methanol, a poisonous form of alcohol. Officers in Berkshire believe the fake whisky is being distributed around the country. They have also found a stock of counterfeit labels for a product called 'Highland Pride Finest Scotch Whisky' which suggests that a contaminated product bearing these labels could be on the market.

People in North Yorkshire should be aware that counterfeit whisky can be distinguished easily from the real product and that genuine Johnnie Walker and Highland Pride are completely unaffected.

Identification of counterfeit products:

Johnnie Walker

- The rear label is printed in Spanish
- The fake lot code L04P24878342 is printed on the rear of the front centre label
- 'Distilleries' and not 'Distillers' is printed on the Royal Warrant
- There is no 'e' mark on the base of the bottle

Highland Pride (front label)

- Counterfeit states '1L' whereas genuine states '1 Litre'
- Counterfeit states '40% vol' whereas genuine states '43% vol'
- Counterfeit 'PRODUCED AND BOTTLED IN SCOTLAND' whereas genuine is 'BOTTLED IN SCOTLAND'

Graham Venn, Assistant Head of Trading Standards Officer, said: *"Any retailer or member of the public who has bought these products or suspects they are on sale, should contact North Yorkshire's Trading Standards."*

If you need further advice please contact North Yorkshire Trading Standards (Note new contact numbers)

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