RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES FOR OPERATORS - DRINK TAMPERING

Prepared by AXE Management Group

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Recommended Industry Best Practices

Applies to: Owners, managers, bartenders, servers, security personnel, supervisors, and event staff.

1. Purpose

To establish clear, consistent procedures for preventing, identifying, and responding to suspected drink tampering, drug-facilitated sexual assault, and situations involving vulnerable or incapacitated patrons.

Every report of suspected drink tampering must be treated as a potential medical emergency and safety incident until appropriately assessed.

Employees must not dismiss concerns because a patron appears intoxicated or because there is no immediate evidence of tampering.

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2. Recognizing Potential Warning Signs

Employees should be alert to:

- Sudden or unexplained intoxication inconsistent with observed alcohol consumption.
- Dizziness, confusion, disorientation, or unusual drowsiness.
- Difficulty standing, walking, speaking, or maintaining consciousness.
- Unexpected nausea, vomiting, or memory loss.
- Individuals attempting to isolate, physically control, or remove an obviously impaired patron.
- Suspicious handling of another person's beverage.
- A patron expressing concern that their drink has been altered.

These symptoms may have several possible causes. Staff should not attempt to diagnose the cause before providing assistance.

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3. Immediate Response — Mandatory Procedure

STEP 1 — INTERVENE
Any employee receiving a complaint or observing a potential incident must immediately notify the manager on duty and security, where available.
Stop serving alcohol to the affected patron while the situation is assessed.

STEP 2 — PROTECT THE PATRON
Move the person to a quiet, safe area when medically appropriate. Assign a responsible employee to remain with them. (If possible someone of the same sex).

Do not leave the person unattended or permit an unknown or potentially ininvolved individual to remove them from the premises.

Do not physically move someone unnecessarily if they are unconscious or seriously ill.

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STEP 3 — OBTAIN MEDICAL ASSISTANCE
Call 911 immediately for unconsciousness, breathing difficulties, seizures, severe confusion, or other serious symptoms. Suspected drink tampering with concerning symptoms warrants urgent medical assessment.

Follow dispatcher instructions and provide first aid within staff training.

Do not induce vomiting, force food or fluids, or assume the individual can safely recover by sleeping.

STEP 4 — PRESERVE EVIDENCE
Where safely possible:

- Secure the suspected beverage and its container without discarding the contents.
- Avoid unnecessary handling or contamination.
- Record the location and time the beverage was collected and everyone who handles it.
- Preserve relevant CCTV footage, including bar service areas, entrances, exits, and surrounding patron activity.
- Identify potential witnesses and record their contact information.
- Preserve relevant transaction records and incident communications.

Do not attempt to conduct your own forensic investigation.

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STEP 5 — NOTIFY POLICE

Contact police when criminal activity is suspected. Call 911 where an immediate threat or emergency exists.

Management should communicate relevant observations and evidence while protecting the patron's privacy and respecting applicable legal obligations.

The affected person should be informed of available reporting options and supported in making their own decisions wherever legally and medically possible.

STEP 6 — DOCUMENT THE INCIDENT

The manager must complete a confidential written incident report before the end of the shift or as soon as reasonably practical.

Include the time, location, observable symptoms, statements made, witnesses, employee actions, medical response, police reference number (if applicable), and evidence secured.

Record facts rather than speculation, accusations, or unconfirmed conclusions.

4. Managing a Suspected Offender

Where a person is reasonably suspected of interfering with someone's beverage or targeting an impaired individual:

- Notify management and security immediately.
- Prioritize separating the individual from the affected patron.
- Do not permit employees to confront the person aggressively or place themselves in danger.
- Contact police and provide relevant information.
- Preserve footage and witness statements.
- Consider removal or exclusion in accordance with applicable law, venue policy, and police instructions.

Staff must not make public accusations or circulate identifying information based solely on an unverified allegation.

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5. Preventative Operating Standards

RANS recommends that operators:

- Provide direct handoff of beverages to the intended recipient wherever practical.
- Never add alcohol or other ingredients to another person's drink without the intended recipient's knowledge and consent.
- Remove unattended drinks from circulation, while preserving any beverage potentially connected to an incident.
- Train staff to identify potentially predatory behaviour.
- Monitor patrons who appear unusually impaired, particularly when another individual is attempting to escort them away.
- Maintain appropriate lighting, trained security coverage, and functioning surveillance systems where installed.
- Display visible signage explaining how patrons can discreetly request assistance.
- Provide regular refresher training and designate a response lead for every shift.

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6. Safe Departure Procedures

Staff must never knowingly send an incapacitated or seriously unwell patron out of the establishment alone.

Where immediate medical assistance is necessary, arrange emergency services rather than relying on a taxi or rideshare.

Where emergency treatment is not indicated, work with the patron to identify a safe transportation plan and trusted support person.

If a patron is observed leaving showing signs of impairment, stop and ask a few questions to ensure the patron is in safe hands. Even the most intoxicated person knows their name and the name of the person they are with.....***one sure sign of drink tampering is the inability to have any type of conversation.***

7. Confidentiality and Follow-Up

All incidents must be treated sensitively and confidentially.

Only employees with a legitimate operational need should have access to incident records and relevant footage.

Management should review each incident to identify opportunities for improved prevention, staffing, supervision, and response.

PROTECT THE PATRON. PRESERVE THE EVIDENCE. REPORT APPROPRIATELY. DOCUMENT THE INCIDENT.

8. Drink Tampering Incident Response Kit

Maintain a Drink Tampering Incident Response Kit containing an incident reporting form, evidence bags or secure containers, emergency contacts, staff response instructions, and a procedure for preserving surveillance footage.