

DOCTORS, SHERIFFS UNITE AGAINST POWDERED ALCOHOL IN MICHIGAN



Allegan County Sheriff Blaine Koops speaks at a press conference in support of bills that would ban powdered alcohol in Michigan. (Emily Lawler | MLive.com)

By Emily Lawler | elawler@mlive.com MLive.com
April 28, 2015 at 1:29 PM

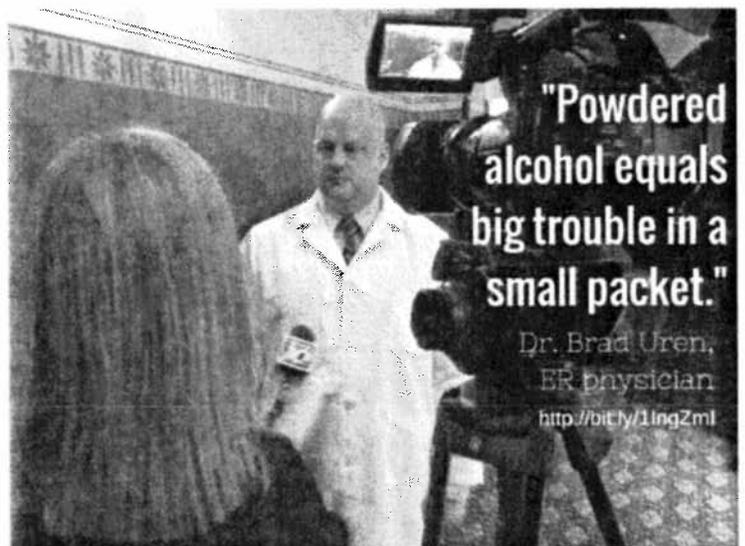
LANSING, MI -- A powdered alcohol known as "palcohol" has been approved by the federal government, but members of Michigan's medical and police communities said today it could spell trouble.

"We feel that powdered alcohol equals big trouble in a small packet," said Dr. Brad Uren of the Michigan College of Emergency Physicians.

Sen. Rick Jones, R-Grand Ledge, and Rep. Scott Dianda, D-Calumet, have introduced legislation in each chamber that would ban the sale and possession of powdered alcohol in Michigan.

"The kids are already looking forward to having this product. They talk about it coming in packets like Kool-Aid," Jones said at a press conference on Tuesday.

The makers of Palcohol, which got federal approval in March, say it's safer than liquid



alcohol.

"Liquid alcohol is easier to conceal, easier to spike drinks and easier to use to binge drink. It's much less expensive and allows someone to get drunk faster, both which appeal to the underage drinker," reads a statement on Palcohol's website.

The advantage of Palcohol, its makers say, is that people can carry the lightweight substance with them on outdoor activities like hikes. Airplanes could also carry the lightweight powder to save on fuel costs and it could also serve as a medical antiseptic in remote locations, makers say.

But those working to ban the product in Michigan say it would be easier for young kids to conceal and people to sneak into bars or other venues.

Allegan County Sheriff Blaine Koops, who is also part of the Michigan Sheriffs Association, said the product was dangerous.

"This is probably the most reckless and dangerous product that I've seen introduced in my tenure as a public safety officer. There's no redeeming quality for this product," Koops said.

According to Michigan Alcohol Policy, a group that promotes health and safety, Michigan would join six states that have already banned the powdered alcohol: Alaska, Louisiana, Maryland, South Carolina, Vermont and Virginia. Another 23 states, including Michigan, are considering bans on the product.

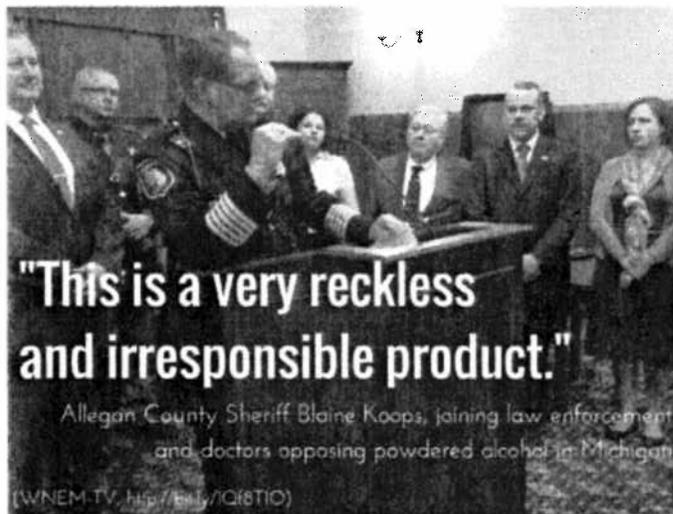
In Michigan, the bills that would ban it are House Bill 4416 and Senate Bill 240.

Law enforcement, health advocates, businesses call on MI Legislature to ban powdered alcohol

04/28/2015

LANSING – Law enforcement leaders, health care professionals and businesses Tuesday joined forces with legislators to support proposals banning powdered alcohol in Michigan and called on the entire state Legislature to act without delay.

“Powdered alcohol equals big trouble in a small packet,” said **Dr. Brad Uren** of the **Michigan College of Emergency Physicians**. “We should be very concerned that powdered alcohol will open the door to more underage drinking, more over-consumption and more drunken driving on Michigan roads. Because of the risks of this new form of highly concentrated, highly concealable alcohol, we’re calling on the Legislature to act immediately and ban this dangerous product.”



“Powdered alcohol products make it easier for teens and underage minors to access and abuse alcohol, and the prospect of children illegally using an alcoholic substance with potentially dangerous consequences is frightening,” said **Dr. Ekram Smith** of the **Michigan Academy of Family Physicians**. “We encourage Michigan lawmakers to ban powdered alcohol and help keep families and children safe.”

Sen. **Rick Jones** (R-Grand Ledge), a former Eaton County sheriff, and Rep. **Scott Dianda**, (D-Calumet), who owned a family retail store, have introduced proposals to ban powdered alcohol. Dozens of senators and

representatives from both parties have co-signed the proposed ban. Major statewide health, law enforcement and business organizations formally support a ban.

The show of support was announced at a news conference in Lansing that included: the **Michigan College of Emergency Physicians**; the **Michigan Academy of Family Physicians**; **Police Chief Brian Peacock** of Pottersville; **Police Chief Bob Delmarter** of Leslie; **Police Chief Bruce Ferguson** of DeWitt; **Police Chief Lisa Sherman** of Charlotte; the **Michigan Licensed Beverage Association**; **Michigan Alcohol Policy Promoting Health and Safety**; and others. A ban on powdered alcohol is also supported by the **Michigan State Medical Society**; the **Michigan Chapter of the American Pediatric Society**; **AFPD**, representing independent retailers; and the **Michigan Pharmacists Association**.

“Powdered alcohol is a problem we don’t need in Michigan. There is no upside to this product,” said **Rep. Dianda**. “If it comes to our area, minors will abuse it and adults will get super-drunk, intentionally

or not intentionally. Why wait until kids have hurt themselves trying to snort it, or somebody has gotten seriously ill by mixing powdered alcohol with liquid alcohol? Letting it enter our communities would be a serious mistake that would endanger the health of our children and families.”

“Makers of powdered alcohol are making flavors that appeal to kids, like ‘lemon drop,’ and young children might not be able to distinguish between a powdered alcohol packet and one for Kool-Aid,” **Sen. Jones** said. “We should be very concerned that someone could be victimized by a predator who slips this product into another person’s drink, greatly increasing its alcohol content without their knowledge. The public health and public safety risks are simply too great and that’s why we’re going to close the door on this irresponsible product.”

The potency of a drink made with powdered alcohol varies with how much water is added, so consumers may easily over-consume. Health experts fear some people may mix the powdered alcohol with alcoholic beverages – not water – to create a super-alcoholic drink. Some may try to spike other’s beverages without their knowledge, or even snort it for what they think may be a more immediate buzz. A *Vice News* report in 2014 said powdered alcohol burns like napalm.

The *New York Times* reported April 3 that the maker of powdered alcohol product Palcohol had bragged about unorthodox and potentially risky uses for his product: “In 2012, Mark Phillips needed a way to market his new invention: a powdered form of alcohol that could be mixed with water. You could sprinkle it on guacamole, although snorting it would get you drunk quickly and was probably not a good idea, Mr. Phillips wrote online in those earlier days.” Though Phillips has removed the statements from his Website, Facebook users did not forget, posting that he reminded people to add Palcohol after a dish was cooked so the alcohol would not burn off “and that defeats the whole purpose.” One news site called the product, made by an Arizona company, “the sneakiest and most efficient way to get drunk.”

“Michigan’s family owned beer and wine distributors applaud the Michigan Legislature’s proposal to ban powdered alcohol and keep this irresponsible product out of the hands of minors and people who might abuse it or use it to harm others,” said **Mike Lashbrook**, president of the **Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers Association**, which represents 50 independent distributors in the state. “A product like powdered alcohol puts public health and safety at risk, and that’s why so many people are rightfully concerned about the potential for this product to be misused and abused.”

Scott Ellis, executive director of the **Michigan Licensed Beverage Association**, said: “Responsible adults who want to enjoy an alcoholic beverage or two at the end of the day with friends and family are not likely to reach for a packet of freeze-dried palcohol. Palcohol is just another danger recklessly exposing minors to alcohol. As a former police officer, I know law enforcement, educators and parents work very hard to keep alcohol in conventional liquid form out of the hands of teenagers, and tiny grains of alcohol in small packets will only make things worse.”

Auday Arabo, president and CEO of the **AFPD** representing large and small retailers, grocery stores and gas stations, said: “Our members in every channel of the retail business work very hard keeping alcohol away from minors and teenagers. Businesses in communities across Michigan are committed to doing the right thing as the first point of access. Powdered alcohol is one dangerous product that will make this effort harder, and we don’t need it on our shelves, in our stores and in our communities!”

At least six states have banned powdered alcohol, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures, and 30 others are considering bans.