Energy drinks contain caffeine as their primary ingredient, in addition to other stimulants such as guarana, which enhances the effect of caffeine. These drinks can contain alcohol and are frequently mixed with alcoholic beverages. A major concern with energy drinks is the way they are being marketed, primarily to youth and in a similar manner to energy drinks containing alcohol. This can cause confusion among consumers, police, parents and retailers as to who is drinking what. Consumers of energy drinks who mix them with alcohol may falsely believe that they are less impaired due to the ingredients in energy drinks. This can lead to increased consumption of alcohol with the perception that activities such as driving are safer than they actually are.

### EFFECTS

High levels of caffeine can boost heart rate and blood pressure, causing palpitations, according to National Institute of Health. Mixing these drinks with alcohol further increases the risk of heart rhythm problems. Mixing alcohol and energy drinks can worsen the effects of dehydration on users. The FDA's review (2010) concluded that the combination of alcohol and caffeine is dangerous because it makes drinkers feel less intoxicated than they actually are. This disconnect makes people more likely to engage in drunk driving, unsafe sexual activity and other dangerous behaviors, according to the panel convened by the FDA.
INCIDENCE & PREVALENCE
According to SAMHSA’s Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) 2009 estimates, trend data show a sharp increase in the number of emergency department (ED) visits involving energy drinks between 2005 (1,128 visits) and 2008 and 2009 (16,053 and 13,114 visits, respectively), representing about a tenfold increase between 2005 and 2009. Approximately half of the energy drink related ED visits (52 percent) made by patients aged 18 to 25 involved combinations of energy drinks with alcohol or other drugs.

LAW & CRIMINAL JUSTICE
In November 2010, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sent warning letters to four companies—Phusion Projects, Charge Beverages Corporation, New Century Brewing Company, United Brands Company Inc.—alerting them that the high level of caffeine in the alcoholic drinks amounted to an “unsafe food additive.” In 2010, leaders with the Indiana Association of Beverage Retailers announced a voluntary recall of alcoholic energy drinks at its nearly 1,000 member stores.