

Super Bowl Sunday and Social Host Responsibilities: Keeping the Party “In Bounds” and Safe Written January 27, 2014



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If history is any indicator, this coming Sunday – like every Super Bowl Sunday before it – will be a big event in the United States. It’s been estimated only Thanksgiving is a bigger day during the year for food and beverage consumption for Americans. According to a [survey by the Retail Advertising and Marketing Association](#) conducted in 2011, almost 35 million people planned to host a Super Bowl party that year, and 62 million others planned to attend one. We can only imagine those numbers will be larger in 2014.

As is true for other get-togethers, alcohol often plays a role in Super Bowl Sunday festivities. Accordingly, good hosts should take steps to keep their guests “in bounds” when it comes to alcohol consumption. The consequences relating to impaired driving can be catastrophic. The most recent figures by the [National Highway Traffic Administration](#) reveal that on Super Bowl Sunday, 48% of the fatalities occurred in crashes in which a driver or motorcycle rider had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level of .08 or higher.

Social host liability varies from state to state. While many states have held there is no liability to the host for injuries sustained by an adult guest who was overserved, that’s not always the rule. Moreover, if the guest is under 21, most courts agree liability exists for the host – the reason being that public policy dictates that underaged persons should not be served alcohol, no matter the circumstances. And, when it comes to injuries to third parties (i.e., persons injured by an intoxicated guest), a good portion of states have laws that allow a host to be held liable for any injury or death to those injured or killed by intoxicated guests.

Play it safe. If you are planning on hosting a Super Bowl party, here are some strategies to limit your liability, as well as protect your guests and others:

- Know and understand your state’s laws concerning social host liability.
- Review your homeowners insurance policy and other insurance coverage to determine if there are any exclusions, conditions or limitations your policy might have for this kind of risk.
- Consider places other than your home to host your party where alcohol service can be managed by a third party. Alternatively, consider hiring a professional bartender for your party at home.
- Have guests plan ahead. Always designate a non-drinking driver before any party or celebration begins. Don’t let guests drink and drive.
- Serve alcohol responsibly. No drinking games or other contests, which encourage overservice.
- Offer plenty of food and snacks, as well as alcohol-free beverages, and encourage the consumption of the same by guests.
- Stop serving alcohol towards the end of the evening. In many professional sports venues, alcohol service is cut off in the fourth quarter. Consider doing the same.

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