

## Police and local businesses crack down on fake ID laws

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by [Kate Seckinger](#) | [Intrigue Reporter](#)

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Using a fake ID is a way for younger students to party like upperclassmen, but the Auburn Police Division and local businesses are cracking down on people using fake IDs.

An employee of Z&Z Tobacco and Spirits on North College Street, who wishes to remain anonymous, said he knows many students possess and use a fake, and he and his fellow employees won't put up with it.

"We just don't allow underage drinking," said the employee. "There are signs up everywhere in our store telling you that 'We ID everyone, every time.'"

The signs posted in Z&Z tell customers they'll be carded when they walk in the door, but the employee said they are still surprised when they get up to the register and their identification is scanned.

"Even if we get a customer who's a regular, we'll look at his ID and scan it for verification," the employee said. "If we run it and it comes back fake, there's no sale and you lose possession of that ID."

The employee said it may sound harsh, but in a college town, the precautions are critical.

"We scan them for our safety and yours," the employee said. "We don't mess around with that, and neither should anyone else. Using a fake ID isn't something that should be taken lightly."

Community Services Capt. Will Mathews said APD has never taken underage drinking lightly, and APD is cracking down harder than ever with the help of new grant funding.

Recently, the division partnered with the East Alabama Mental Health Center. The partnership required funding to provide education about underage drinking and enforce laws preventing the illegal consumption of alcohol.

The funds allowed APD to place more officers downtown to look for underage drinking violations.

The extra officers patrol the downtown bar scene Wednesday through Saturday nights, and have been active since mid-October. Mathews said APD plans to extend the support as long as the grant funds are available.

Mathews said officers were eager to increase presence downtown on heavier partying nights.

“Underage drinking violations aren’t more important to us now than (they were) six months or a year ago,” Mathews said. “We’ve just been given the opportunity to work more and have the slots for officers to do it.”

Mathews said the Auburn officers perform foot patrols on downtown sidewalks and the bars or businesses selling alcohol.

Mathews said this extra presence is to ensure the safety of students around Auburn.

“Officers will go in different bars from time to time to walk through and see if something gives them reasonable suspicion a crime is being committed,” Mathews said. “If a student is visibly intoxicated and is causing a disruption, it’s procedure to check his or her ID.”

Mathews said an officer needs probable cause to check identification, but wants to remind students simply possessing a fake ID is illegal.

“You can be charged with a misdemeanor offense for having that fake in your possession and not even using it,” Mathews said. “If you take it to the next step and present yourself as someone or an age you’re not, you’re looking at even bigger fines and a court date.”

Mathews said he wants to remind students the legal drinking age is set at 21 for a scientific purpose.

“We realize this is a college town and students want to experiment, but it often turns into a tragedy,” Mathews said. “We want to prevent that, and part of the way we can do it is being present downtown on the nights those tragedies tend to happen.”

Ben McNeese, bouncer at The Bank Vault on South College Street, said Auburn police officers have definitely increased their presence.

“It’s not a bad thing like students may think it is,” McNeese said. “They’re trying to take care of people. I can see it from both sides, obviously, but they congregate right here and I’ve talked to them. They mean well, and when they say that, they’re telling the truth.”

McNeese said while other businesses might turn a blind eye to using fake IDs, The Bank Vault does not.

“We follow the rules,” McNeese said. “We have nothing to hide.”

McNeese said he didn’t go out and drink at bars until he was 21 because it’s better that way.

“Taking that risk just wasn’t worth it to me,” McNeese said. “There’s no point in wanting to have a good time, but having to be worried the whole time. I didn’t want to be paranoid. I know it’s unlikely for them to listen, but I advise students to do the same. Taking the chance of having a charge on your record isn’t worth one night.”

Mathews said he wants students to know the police aren’t downtown to ruin students’ nights.

“We realize most students are on their own for the first time and they’re testing the boundaries,” Mathews said. “We’re sensitive to that, but at the same time, we have an obligation to the community to protect people who might not be thinking with the clearest mind. You hear about the dangers of consuming too much alcohol or driving under the influence, but using a fake ID has the same consequences. We have to protect them from themselves and protect them from hurting someone else.”

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