

TOWN OF VERNON

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Sept. 25, 2023

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Town of Vernon and Connecticut Department of Transportation Launch ‘Nip Responsibly’ Campaign

(VERNON, Connecticut) – Nip bottles of alcohol carelessly discarded along Connecticut’s roadways are not only a littering problem, but evidence of a drinking and driving problem.

The nickel-per-nip law passed by the Connecticut General Assembly in 2021, and the \$6.5 million distributed to Connecticut municipalities since then, has demonstrated that Connecticut residents consume and then toss a lot of nip bottles of liquor.

The Town of Vernon and the Connecticut Department of Transportation urge motorists to “Nip Responsibly” and not drink and drive or litter.

“We are taking a big picture approach to the nip bottle littering problem that is occurring across our community, Connecticut and New England,” Vernon Mayor Dan Champagne said. “We have partnered with local non-profits to carryout litter cleanup across Vernon. Now our goal is to identify and address the root causes of the littering problem by appealing to people’s better nature. We all know we shouldn’t litter or drink and drive.”

More than 1.4 million nip bottles of liquor were sold in Vernon between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023. During the same period, more than 94 million nip bottles were sold across Connecticut.

“I hear from our crews on the roadways that they see liquor bottles – large and small – repeatedly in the same spots. This tells me that people are consuming alcohol on their way to their destination and tossing it out the window. That’s an incredibly dangerous habit and puts lives at risk,” Connecticut Department of Transportation Commissioner Garrett Eucalitto said. “Do not drive impaired. Do not throw anything out of the window. Littering is not only bad for the environment, it is wasting taxpayer dollars, forcing CTDOT staff to spend time cleaning up the mess left behind.”

According to liquor retailers, many who purchase nip bottles of liquor buy more than one at a time and consume them soon after purchase. A nip is equal to a shot of liquor. For most drivers, consuming three to four nips in an

hour would put them over the legal limit to drive. In 2020, Connecticut ranked third in the nation for drunken driving deaths.

“Drivers consuming nip bottles of liquor is not the whole drunken driving problem, but it’s certainly part of the challenge we face,” Vernon Town Administrator and Emergency and Risk Manager Michael Purcaro said. “We urge drivers to take responsibility for their conduct and to keep our roads safe. Nip responsibly. Please don’t drink and drive and please don’t litter.”

Even a nip bottle or two can impact a driver’s judgment and reaction time, according a study by Texas A&M University. Having a blood alcohol content that is less than the legal limit can still mean impairment, according to the study’s authors.

“Wait until you get home to have a drink,” added Matt Hellman, Vernon’s Director of Social Services. “We know that many who consume nip bottles of alcohol have more than one at a time. Do yourself and others on the road a favor by nipping responsibly.”

The focus of the “Nip Responsibly” campaign is public health and safety and reducing litter, not interfering with businesses that operate legally and the people who patronize those businesses, Purcaro said.

“Given that more than a million nip bottles of liquor are sold in Vernon each year, and millions more are sold across the state, it is imperative that we raise this public health and safety issue and appeal to people to ‘Nip Responsibly,’” said Patrice Sulik, Director of Health for the North Central District Health Department.

Resources are available for people concerned they may have a drinking problem and want help. In Vernon, help is available through Rockville General Hospital’s Behavioral Health Services at **860-533-3434**.

The Connecticut Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services has a 24-hour access line for people seeking help. **The number is 1-800-563-4086. Help is also available by calling 211 or going to 211.org.**

Dipen Shah, owner of Lafayette Wines & Liquors in Vernon, said nip bottles are popular with consumers for a variety of reasons, including convenience, the opportunity to sample a beverage and, in some cases, to save money.

“We are here to serve our customers by providing the products they want,” Shah said. “At the same time, our industry has a strong record of urging responsible use of the products we sell. We have long urged our customers not to drink and drive. We also urge them not to litter.”

At the Mayor’s direction and with the approval of the Town Council, Vernon has used a portion of its nip bottle surcharge revenue to establish partnerships with non-profits to fund litter collection. These include Opportunity Works and Boy Scout Troop 2020, both of which carry out litter collection efforts around town. The team from Opportunity Works, known as the “Nip Patrol,” is cleaning up our community several days a week.

About the Town of Vernon

The Town of Vernon is a celebrated place to live, work and visit. From its beautiful parks and lakes, to its vast trails and historic homes and buildings, Vernon is a resilient and thriving community that promotes the health and wellbeing of its residents and values the natural environment. With a resident population of more than 30,000 and occupying 18.03 square miles, Vernon combines a balanced appreciation of history, and a strong economic base for growth, both residential and commercial. Located 15 minutes east of the Connecticut capital of Hartford,

and 25 miles from the City of Springfield, Massachusetts, the Town of Vernon is strategically located in “New England's Knowledge Corridor” with close proximity to some of the top colleges and universities in the country.

Designated a certified Sustainable Community, the Town of Vernon offers a wide range of benefits and services to its residents. The Town of Vernon is a full-service municipality that practices a management philosophy of continuous quality improvement. To learn more about the Town of Vernon, please call (860) 870-3670 or visit www.vernon-ct.gov.

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