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Crime Prevention Unit
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Prevention of Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assaults

A notable increase has occurred in recent years in the frequency of drug-facilitated sexual assaults. The victims of these sexual assaults (most frequently women) are often older adolescents and young adults at bars, nightclubs, rave clubs and social parties.

The Use of Drug-Facilitated Sexual Assaults

Alcohol

It is important to bear in mind that the use of recreational drugs to facilitate rape and sexual assault is not a new phenomenon. Having been used almost as long as recorded history, alcohol remains the most widely used date rape drug.

“Date Rape” or “Predatory” Drugs

The use of “date rape” or “predatory” drugs has become increasingly prevalent. As these drugs have become more sophisticated in their effectiveness, they have been used more frequently to facilitate rape. They are increasingly used as “knock-out drugs” to render female victims helpless and amnesic.

The typical tactic for committing drug-facilitated sexual assaults is to slip the drug unknowingly into the drink of a female. The victim usually loses consciousness in a short period of time, and often has no memory of the event.

Rohypnol

Rohypnol is Hoffman-LaRoche’s registered trade name for Flunitrazepam, a benzodiazepine drug in the same family of medications as Valium and Xanax. It is manufactured in Switzerland and is legal in 64 countries as a prescription drug for sleep disorders and psychiatric cases. It is 10 times more potent than Valium.

Rohypnol has never been approved for any medical use in the United States. It is illegal to manufacture, distribute, or possess Rohypnol in the United States. Rohypnol is a controlled substance in Schedule IV of the Federal Controlled Substances Act. Under federal law, simple possession of Rohypnol to another person without the person’s knowledge and with intent to commit a crime of violence is punishable by up to 20 years in prison and a fine. Possession and misuse of Rohypnol is also a violation of state criminal statutes in many states.

Rohypnol is similar in size, shape and color to aspirin. The pill is a small white tablet that is single or cross-scored on one side and has the word “Roche” and a circled number 1 or 2 on the other side. They are sold in pre-sealed, foil-wrapped “bubble packs” of one or two mg. doses.

Rohypnol dissolves easily in juice, coffee, carbonated and alcoholic beverages. It was traditionally colorless, odorless, and tasteless when dissolved in a liquid. The manufacturer, however, has reformulated it so that it imparts an easily identifiable blue color to clear beverages and a haziness to colored beverages.

Rohypnol is a potent sedative. It usually takes effect within 20 minutes after ingestion, and the effects may last for up to 8-10 hours. **Rohypnol** may cause dizziness, disorientation, uninhibited behavior, impaired judgment, and reduced levels of consciousness. The victim may act and look like someone who is drunk. Their speech may be slurred and they may have difficulty walking, or they may be rendered unconscious.

It is dangerous to mix **Rohypnol** with alcohol or other drugs. The combination can produce extremely low blood pressure, respiratory depression, difficulty breathing, coma or even death.

Rohypnol may also produce complete or partial amnesia about the events that occur after it is ingested.

Rohypnol is a low cost drug, often sold at less than \$5.00 per tablet.

Among the street names for **Rohypnol** are Roofies, Rophies, Roaches, Forget Pill, Poor Man's Quaalude, Lunch Money (referring to the drug's low cost on the street), Pappas or Potatoes (referring to the mental capacity of someone under the influence of the drug), Whiteys, Dulcitas, Negatives or Minuses (referring to the markings on a 1 mg. tablet), R-2s, Roach-2s, Circles, Rope, Rib, Trip-and-Fall, Mind-Erasers, Mexican Valium.

GHB

GHB is gamma-hydroxybutyrate. It was originally used as an anesthetic on humans in Europe in the 1950's. It has never been approved for use in the United States.

Most of the **GHB** being used today is manufactured illegally by "kitchen chemists" by mixing various chemical ingredients, including solvents and caustic soda. Because there are significant differences in the purity, concentration and potency of various batches, home-brewed **GHB** can be especially dangerous. There can be a very narrow margin between the dose that will produce intoxication effects and the amount that will induce serious life-threatening effects. Manufacturing instructions for making **GHB** can be easily obtained over the Internet.

GHB comes in a lumpy white powder form or as a clear liquid. It can be snorted, smoked or mixed in drinks. When dissolved in a drink, it is colorless and odorless. It may have a slight, salty aftertaste, however.

GHB is frequently distributed at clubs, bars, raves, and other parties. It is usually doled out by capfuls, teaspoons, or "swigs." It may be sold or passed around in containers of varying sizes, including sports bottles, designer water bottles, eye dropper bottles, baby food jars, and plastic water jugs.

The effects of **GHB** may include dizziness, nausea, vomiting, disorientation, seizures, respiratory depression, intense drowsiness, unconsciousness, and coma. It acts as a depressant on the central nervous system. The effects of the drug start with giddiness but lead to a deep sleep accompanied by amnesia.

Among the street names for **GHB** are Grievous Bodily Harm (GHB) Liquid X, Liquid E, Liquid Ecstasy, Easy Lay, G, Vita-G, G-juice, Georgia Home Boy, Great Hormones, Somatomax, Bedtime Scoop, Soap, Gook, Gamma 10, and Energy Drink.

GHB usually costs \$5.00-\$10.00 per dose. Federal legislation enacted in February, 2000, places GHB on Schedule 1 of the Controlled Substances Act, the most strictly regulated drugs. Anyone who possesses, manufactures, or distributes GHB can be imprisoned up to 20 years.

Recommendation for Women

- Limit alcoholic drinks to a maximum of one or two per hour.
- Do not gulp alcoholic beverages.
- Be wary of opened alcoholic beverages offered by strangers or male acquaintances.
- Let your date be the first to drink from the punchbowl at a bar, club, or rave.

- Avoid group drinking and particularly avoid participating in drinking games.
- Check with local police departments; they are usually a good source of information about the location of bars, clubs, and areas where drug-facilitated sexual assault is known to have occurred.
- When at an unfamiliar bar, directly observe your drink being poured by the bartender.
- If your opened beverage tastes, looks or smells strange, do not drink it.
- After returning to your table after dancing, using the restroom or making a telephone call, obtain a fresh drink.
- If you feel giddy or lightheaded at a bar, club, or party, get assistance.
- If you arrived with friends, a prearranged plan should be in place to check on each other visually and verbally before separately departing a bar, club, or party.
- If one of your friends appears to be intoxicated, get help (consider calling 911).

Possible Crime Prevention Initiatives

The following are a series of crime prevention initiatives or programs for law enforcement agencies to address the problems of **Rohypnol** and **GHB** and drug-facilitated sexual assaults.

- Develop a training bulletin and roll-call training for police officers.
- Place information about the problem on the law enforcement agencies Internet web site.
- Encourage School Resource Officers (SRO's) to be knowledgeable about the problem and possibly incorporate information in their school presentations.
- Encourage or assist bartender training at local bars and nightclubs.
- Develop programs for female students at colleges and universities.