

Report to the Tyne and Wear Trading Standards Joint Committee

14 February 2019

Radanoff Vodka

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Purpose of the report

To update the Committee on the response provided nationally and regionally to the issue of “Radanoff” vodka.

1. In January 2019 following work by Trading Standards colleagues from Hull City Council, it emerged that a fake brand of vodka which may contain industrial-strength alcohol and cause serious health issues - and even death - has reached the shelves of UK shops.
2. Hull City Council admitted there is no way of knowing what is in bottles of “Radanoff”, a brand of alcohol which seemingly is ‘not recognised’. Hull City Council warned the public not to buy it. The bottles have no HMRC duty stamp and the barcode does not link to a real product.
3. Hull City Council on the 14 January 2019 through the authority’s twitter account stated: *“Warning: if you spot ‘Radanoff’ vodka for sale, do not buy or drink it. Radanoff is a fake brand seized recently in Hull. It could contain industrial alcohol which can cause blindness or death. Tests are still to be carried out on the bottles seized - until those are complete there’s no way of knowing what’s in the bottles. Tests are still to be carried out on the bottles seized - until those are complete there’s no way of knowing what’s in the bottles”.*
4. The response locally by officers in the north east has been to publicise the seizure of the “Radanoff” vodka with consumers, businesses and other enforcement colleagues including Northumbria Police. There have also been inspection visits to licensed premises in the area.
5. The advice offered to businesses tempted to buy the illegal alcohol from unscrupulous traders is simple – “Don’t risk it”. There are clearly several potential offences under consumer protection legislation including food safety.
6. Businesses are also advised by HMRC that If they sell alcohol to another business they may need to apply for approval for the Alcohol Wholesaler Registration Scheme (AWRS). HMRC introduced the scheme to tackle alcohol fraud. From 1 April 2017 if businesses buy alcohol to sell from a UK wholesaler, they will need to check that the wholesaler has been approved by HMRC and has an AWRS Unique Reference Number (URN).

7. Businesses are advised that they will need to carry out checks before they trade with each wholesaler. They will need to repeat this check periodically, to ensure their wholesalers remain approved for AWRS and, they should keep records of the checks as evidence of their due diligence. Go to: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-alcohol-wholesaler-registration-scheme-awrs>
8. Businesses have also been advised that the discovery of any illegal alcohol in licensed premises may very well lead to an initiation of a Review of a Premises Licence leading to potential revocation of that licence under the provisions of the Licensing Act 2003. As Members will be aware this is a tactical approach, which has been successfully employed in this region and led to the suspension and revocation of a significant number of Premises Licences.
9. The advice offered to consumers is simply not to buy the alcohol but if they see the brand on sale report it through to regulatory services so that action can be taken. If consumers do drink the “Radanoff” vodka and feel unwell as a result, they are advised to seek medical assistance as a matter of some urgency.



Recommendation

10. The Committee is asked to note the information as contained within the report.

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