



# FIGHTING CONTAINER LOSSES

October 2008

## BREWER GUIDELINES

### OWNERSHIP AND IDENTIFICATION

All brewers must take every opportunity to promote the message that they ALWAYS retain ownership of their containers and that these containers are returnable assets.

Terms and conditions of trade must emphasise that the customer is responsible for ensuring that empty containers are returned to the supplier/owning company.

All containers should be marked with as many ownership details as practicable (for instance company name stamped into the metal, colour bands, registered by the BBPA), and a warning ("this container remains the property of xxxx - third party use or disposal prohibited") should be clearly visible on every container.

A record of container serial numbers should be kept as part of an asset register.

### DISPOSAL AND RECORDS

All brewers should follow the agreed industry policy on disposal of containers no longer required for trading purposes. The policy states that:

"All kegs and casks that are either damaged beyond repair, or otherwise no longer serviceable, should be destroyed by the manufacturer or some other organisation specifically authorised by the owning brewery for this purpose."

"Any keg or cask that is still serviceable but no longer required for production, may be sold or transferred directly to another brewer. In this case the owning brewer should ensure that all existing company identification is removed before release to the purchaser."

- A record of any sales should be kept (indefinitely) and should contain the following details:
- The name and address of the purchasing company
- The number and size of the containers sold
- The serial number of each of the containers
- The date of the sale
- The invoice number
- All invoices raised in connection with the sale of containers should bear the serial number of the containers they relate to.

Containers should only be offered for sale to legitimate brewing companies and under no circumstances should they be sold to casual callers.

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### COLLECTION OF EMPTIES

It is unreasonable to expect customers to take responsibility for empty containers if the owners do not ensure that all empties are collected on a regular basis. Keg Watch suggests minimum standards which companies might be expected to follow:

- Uplift a minimum of 1 for 1 draught beer containers on normal scheduled deliveries.
- Crews should uplift all available draught containers, within loading capacity of the vehicle.
- Crews should communicate with the depot to arrange uplift of surplus empties on a future date or on the return journey (where the delivery route is linear).
- Customers reporting surplus empties to telesales/ depots/ customer service centres should get uplift within one working week, or sooner if quantities are significant.

It is imperative that employees who are likely to receive an "uplift request" from a customer are made aware of the owning company's policy on the collection of empties and have a point of contact for communicating the uplift request.

Where an account is lost or closed, sales staff should ensure that the appropriate department knows how many containers need to be collected. Uplifts should be made within one working week.

### CONTAINER THEFTS/LOSSES

All losses/thefts of containers from brewer's sites or vehicles should be investigated at the earliest opportunity.

Where containers are stolen from a customer's premises, the customer should be responsible for ensuring that the local police and the owning brewer are informed. The owners must therefore ensure that each customer knows who to contact.

Reports of theft or loss must be recorded by the owners.

Where an account has an unusually low rate of container returns, this should be brought to the attention of the relevant company department and investigations should be made as soon as possible.

### TRANSPORT

Brewers should ensure that a robust system of recording empty container movements is in place.

Only reputable hauliers should be used to transport containers and in all cases hauliers should have strict conditions of employment placed upon them. These conditions should include restrictions on the parking of unattended, loaded vehicles on insecure sites, lorry parks and in lay-bys.

Brewers should also ensure that wherever possible either curtain sided or enclosed trailers are used and that the curtains/doors are secured throughout the journey.

On arrival, loads should be checked against documentation and any discrepancies investigated.

All empties returning on dray vehicles should be checked in against the documentation held by the dray crew.

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## **FIGHTING CONTAINER LOSSES**

### **KEG SPEARS (STEMS)**

All brewers should have a strict policy for the disposal of keg spears (stems) and should ensure that all instructions on disposal are followed to the letter. Keg spears found anywhere other than on a brewer's premises or those of an authorised agent can damage any keg theft/smelting case being prosecuted either now or in the future.

### **REFILLING OF CO2/MIXED GAS CYLINDERS - INDUSTRY POLICY**

The unauthorised re-filling of brewers' gas cylinders has for some time given cause for great concern. Under the auspices of Keg Watch, the industry has taken action against companies who blatantly re-fill these cylinders. Although several major brewing companies no longer supply gas to their customers, for other brewers this remains a considerable problem.

The fact that some companies involved in re-filling cylinders pay little or no attention to the condition of the cylinders they re-fill nor the quality of the CO2/mixed gases they use, does cause great concern to all brewers. The health and safety implications, for instance, the risk of a cylinder exploding under pressure, or the affect the inferior quality gases have on product quality, does indeed involve all brewers.

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