

TTB Alcohol Beverage Sampling Program 2015 Results

TTB's Alcohol Beverage Sampling Program (ABSP) is a random survey of products in the marketplace where we:

- Verify that the labels on alcohol beverages contain adequate descriptive information,
- Confirm that the labels are not likely to mislead consumers, and
- Determine where compliance issues exist.

Each year we purchase products from the marketplace and bring them to our offices for label assessments, where we first evaluate them for compliance with our labeling regulations. Following the label assessments, we send the products to our laboratories for a series of chemical analyses to assess whether the products themselves comply with the information displayed on the product labels.

Overview for 2015 Results

In 2015, we selected 154 distilled spirits, 158 malt beverages, and 138 wines for the 2015 ABSP, for a sample total of 450 products. After analyzing these products, we found 157 products that were non-compliant:

- Distilled spirits: 62 products
- Malt beverage: 61 products
- Wine: 34 products

Common Compliance Issues

Alcohol Content Tolerances

The most common compliance issues we identified involved alcohol content that did not match the label and was outside regulatory tolerances, or that placed the product in a different tax class than indicated by the label. Tolerances vary by commodity:

- Distilled spirits generally allow for a loss of 0.15% alcohol by volume; however, no tolerance is allowed for an increase in alcohol by volume (27 CFR 5.37(b)).
 - On average, for distilled spirits, underproof products were 0.95% alcohol by volume below what was shown on the label, and over proof products were 0.58% alcohol by volume above what was shown on the label.
- Malt beverages generally allow for a tolerance of 0.3% alcohol by volume, either above or below the alcohol content stated on the label (27 CFR 7.71(c)).
 - For malt beverages, underproof products on average were 0.86% alcohol by volume below what was shown on the label, and over proof products were 0.69% alcohol by volume above what was shown on the label.
- Wines are allowed a tolerance of 1% alcohol by volume either above or below the stated label alcohol content for wine containing more than 14% alcohol by volume.
- Wines falling between 7% alcohol by volume and 14% alcohol by volume are allowed a tolerance of 1.5% alcohol by volume (27 CFR 4.36(b)).
 - For wine, two products were found to be outside of tolerance, with one being 2.0% over proof and one being 2.7% underproof.

- If at any point a wine crosses into a different tax class, the tolerances no longer apply. For example, if a wine is labeled as 13.5%, but is found to actually be 14.2%, we would consider this a violation.
 - We found 12 wines with a tax class violation.

Non-Allowable Revisions

Another common compliance issue we identified involved labels that did not match their approved Certificate of Label Approval (COLA) due to changes that were not allowable revisions. 58 of the 157 non-compliant products, or approximately 37%, had labels that contained changes in information, either mandatory or non-mandatory, which differed from the COLA.

For a complete list of findings by commodity, see the charts below.

2015 Findings

You can find the [Definitions for Non-Compliance Categories](#) at TTB.gov.

Distilled Spirits

We identified 82 noncompliance issues in 62 different distilled spirits products.

Reasons for Noncompliance	Number of Products
Alcohol content: over	40
Non-mandatory information differs from the COLA	11
Alcohol content: under	8
Government warning has errors	6
Class, type, or statement of composition is incorrect	5
Mandatory information differs from the Certificate of Label Approval (COLA)	3
Type-size/legibility	3
Mandatory information is missing	2
Other: Label is pasted over	1
Other: Mandatory information is incorrect	1
Other: Distinctive liquor bottle	1
Adulterated	1
Total Instances of Noncompliance	82

Malt Beverages

We identified 81 noncompliance issues in 61 different malt beverage products.

Reasons for Noncompliance	Number of Products
Alcohol content: over	28
Non-mandatory information differs from the COLA	22
Alcohol content: under	10
Government warning has errors	6
Mandatory information is missing	6
Type-size/legibility	5
Mandatory information differs from the Certificate of Label Approval (COLA)	3
Prohibited practices	1
Total Instances of Noncompliance	81

Wine

We identified 45 noncompliance issues in 34 different wine products.

Reasons for Noncompliance	Number of Products
Non-mandatory information differs from the COLA	13
Tax class	12
Mandatory information differs from the Certificate of Label Approval (COLA)	7
Government warning has errors	2
Other: Sulfites	2
Prohibited practices	2
Type-size/legibility	2
Alcohol content: over	1
Alcohol content: under	1
Mandatory information is missing	1
No COLA	1
Class, type, or statement of composition is incorrect	1
Total Instances of Noncompliance	45