Monster Shares Fall Under Mounting Pressure

NEW YORK (AP) — Shares of Monster Beverage Corp. fell Friday after three lawmakers again called on energy drink makers to provide greater disclosures about the ingredients they use and evidence to support their marketing claims.

The letter was sent to companies including Red Bull; Monster; PepsiCo Inc., which makes AMP energy drinks; and Coca-Cola Co., which makes Full Throttle and Nos, following the release of a new government survey that suggests the number of emergency room visits tied to energy drinks doubled nationwide in the past four years.

"The broad claims made by these products and their blurred classification in the marketplace make it difficult for consumers, particularly young consumers, from making informed decisions about their consumption," Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., said in a statement. The other two lawmakers who sent the letter were Sen. Dick Durbin, D-Ill., and Sen. Richard Blumenthal, D-Conn. All three have previously called on federal regulators to investigate the industry.

The latest findings on emergency room visits were based on a survey of the nation's hospitals by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. The report doesn't specify which symptoms brought people to the emergency room but calls energy drink consumption a "rising public health problem" that can cause insomnia, nervousness, headache, fast heartbeat and seizures that are severe enough to require emergency care. It found most the cases involved teens or young adults.

Beverage manufacturers fired back at the survey, saying the statistics were misleading and taken out of context. In terms of sales volume, the top three energy drink makers in the U.S. are Monster, Red Bull and Rockstar.

Concerns over energy drinks have intensified in recent months following reports last fall of 18 deaths possibly tied to the drinks — including a 14-year-old Maryland girl who died after drinking two large cans of Monster Energy drinks. Monster does not believe its products were responsible for the death.

The FDA said it was considering the findings of the latest survey and pressing for more details as it undertakes a broad review of the safety of energy drinks and related ingredients this spring.

Shares of Monster, based in Corona, Calif., were down almost 6 percent at $46.87.

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