OSU, city in a froth over rowdy off-campus bashes

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By JULIE CARR SMYTH

COLUMBUS - City and Ohio State University officials, fed up with huge off-campus parties that spill into the streets, say they're ready to get tough.

Authorities are threatening curfews, a limit on the size of parties and the expulsion of students involved. But OSU spokeswoman Elizabeth Conlisk said yesterday that the university had not decided on a strategy to prevent another confrontation like the one that rocked the neighborhood around E. 13th and E. Norwich avenues early Sunday.

The melee was the second in as many weekends and the sixth in the last year. Police said 10 people were arrested after a crowd of about 2,000 was turned back by officers using pepper spray and firing wooden projectiles. The crowd lighted fires in trash cans and threw bottles at officers.

A weekend earlier, police were called to Chittenden Ave. when a party there poured into the street.

Hoping to prevent a repeat of that April 21 incident, Ohio State staff handed out literature on being a responsible host and working with police. Conlisk said they also distributed "Sober Hosts" kits - which included free cases of Coca-Cola and T-shirts - to those who signed a responsibility pledge. In addition, the university appealed to beer distributors and landlords for help.

An 8-month-old law aimed at curbing excessive beer purchases
and discouraging underage drinking apparently had little impact on the off-campus revelry. Ohio Department of Public Safety spokeswoman Julie Ehrhart said the hosts of Saturday night's beer bash failed to file the required affidavit with the state indicating more than five kegs of beer had been purchased.

A get-tough approach by the city and university is unlikely to work, said Hobart and William Smith Colleges sociology Professor H. Wesley Perkins, an expert in alcohol abuse among college students. According to him, most college students respond best to learning that their peers are not drinking as much as they thought.

Perkins said letting students know that alcohol abusers are in the minority at their school has effectively curbed problem drinking behavior on his campus and around the country.

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