



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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New California Tobacco Laws Go Into Effect

SACRAMENTO - Effective today, the minimum age of sale for tobacco products in California increases from 18 to 21, and for the first time e-cigarettes are added to the existing definition of tobacco products. California is the second state in the nation, following Hawaii, to raise the minimum age for tobacco sales to 21.

“Today marks a significant moment in California history as new tobacco control laws go into effect statewide. This is the first time the Golden State has raised the age of sale for tobacco since the law first took effect 144 years ago,” said Dr. Karen Smith, California Department of Public Health (CDPH) director and state health officer. “Our focus is on reaching more than 34,000 retailers with tobacco licenses and vape shops to provide them the information and resources needed to comply with the new tobacco 21 law.”

To help retailers comply with these new laws, CDPH developed [a series of educational materials](#), including age-of-sale warning signs, window clings reminding customers of the new law and tips to help clerks check identification.

About 34,000 Californians die each year from tobacco use. In addition, tobacco-related diseases cost Californians \$18.1 billion each year in both direct and indirect healthcare costs due to premature death and low productivity due to illness.

As part of the new law defining e-cigarettes as tobacco products, e-cigarettes, e-liquids including vaping devices and accessories can no longer be sold in self-service displays. E-cigarettes are also not allowed in locations where smoking has long been prohibited, including public transit, worksites, restaurants, schools and playgrounds. Approximately 217,000 California youth between the [ages of 12 and 17 currently smoke traditional cigarettes or e-cigarettes](#).

“California is taking a big step forward in preventing a new generation of young people from becoming addicted to nicotine,” said Dr. Smith. “The surge in e-cigarette use among teens and young adults is no accident. The tobacco industry’s aggressive marketing of e-cigarette gadgets and candy flavors is jeopardizing the health of our young people.”

Many e-cigarettes contain nicotine, a highly addictive neurotoxin. Research shows that the brain continues to develop until age 25, and nicotine exposure before that age may cause permanent brain damage and fuel a lifelong battle with addiction. According to the California Department of Education’s California Healthy Kids Survey, middle and high school teens are currently using e-cigarettes at much higher rates than traditional

cigarettes. Studies also show that teens who use e-cigarettes are three times more likely to start smoking traditional cigarettes within a year.

For those struggling with nicotine addiction, resources are available at www.nobutts.org. Californians who want help quitting can call the California Smokers' Helpline at 1-800-NO BUTTS.

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About the California Tobacco Control Program

The California Tobacco Control Program was established by the Tobacco Tax and Health Protection Act of 1988. California's comprehensive approach has changed social norms around tobacco-use and secondhand smoke. California's tobacco control efforts have reduced both adult and youth smoking rates by 50 percent, saved more than one million lives and have resulted in \$134 billion worth of savings in health care costs. Learn more at TobaccoFreeCA.com.

About the Food and Drug Branch

The California Department of Public Health, Food and Drug Branch is charged with enforcing the Stop Tobacco Access to Kids Enforcement Act, and conducts ongoing illegal sales enforcement operations. California retailers caught selling tobacco products to minors during these enforcement operations are subject to fines up to \$6,000.

www.cdph.ca.gov

