



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

News Release

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SURVEY SHOWS FEWER STORES SELLING TOBACCO TO MINORS

HONOLULU - This year's survey by the Hawai'i State Department of Health's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) shows that illegal sales of tobacco to minors in Hawai'i have decreased from 11.2 percent in 2008 to 6.2 percent in 2009. At the current rate, Hawai'i is below the national average of 9.9 percent. The 14th annual survey was conducted by a joint program with the University of Hawai'i's Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i and ADAD. The program conducts inspections of retail outlets that sell tobacco to determine the extent of illegal sales of tobacco products to minors.

"The low sales rates represent a successful effort in establishing a community norm where businesses are aware that they should not sell tobacco to minors," said Lt. Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr. "This year's results are a testament to the good corporate citizenship of the majority of retail tobacco merchants in Hawai'i; however, we must remain vigilant"

Of the four counties included in the 2009 statewide survey, the County of Maui and the County of Hawai'i had the lowest rate at 2.1 percent, and the County of Kauai had the highest rate with 10.5 percent. Within Honolulu County, the area with the lowest rate was Downtown Honolulu (4.7 percent) and the highest was the Windward region (12.5 percent). The County of Kauai increased from 0 to 10.5 percent non-compliance, but the rate is based on fewer than 20 inspections, which resulted in large fluctuations for their estimates. Notably, the County of Maui has kept their non-compliance rate under 8 percent for the past eight years, with an average of 3.7 percent.

(more)

“More than 80 percent of all adult smokers started before the age of 18, so it’s important that we work together as a community to educate our youth about the dangers of tobacco use before they begin smoking,” said Health Director Chiyome Fukino, M.D.

Retailers and clerks can help keep tobacco out of the hands of minors by asking for identification and age. However, of the 22 stores that sold tobacco illegally to a minor, five (22.7 percent) asked for ID and chose to sell tobacco to a youth who did not produce identification. Retailers can also reduce youth access by placing cigarettes in a place where customers have to ask for them.

In Hawai‘i, over 1,100 people die each year due to smoking-related illnesses. Hawai‘i spends approximately \$336 million annually on medical costs relating to tobacco illnesses and \$308 million annually in lost productivity from people who have suffered from a tobacco-related illness.

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration recently restricted tobacco companies from selling flavored cigarettes (excluding menthol) that have been shown to be particularly attractive to youth.

However, the tobacco industry has come out with a variety of new nicotine products, from “snus” (small pouches that are placed in the mouth where the user does not spit) to nicotine water in an effort to counter declines in the youth market. According to the U.S. Federal Trade Commission, the tobacco industry spends approximately \$42 million annually on advertising and promoting tobacco products in Hawai‘i alone.

“Cigarette smoking is the number one preventable cause of death in the United States,” added Dr. Fukino. “Hawai‘i needs to maintain an active and vigilant effort in the area of youth access to limit the use of tobacco products.”

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SYNAR SURVEY FACT SHEET

A Federal law known as the “1992 Synar Amendment” requires all 50 states to enact and enforce laws that prohibit the sale or distribution of tobacco products to youth under age 18. States are also required to annually conduct random, unannounced inspections and document a rate of tobacco sales to minors of no more than 20% or be subject to a penalty of 40% of their Federal Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant funding.

In 2009, teams made up of youth volunteers (ages 15-17) and adult observers visited a random sample of 356 stores in which the youth attempted to buy cigarettes to determine how well retailers were complying with the State tobacco laws. Twenty two stores (6.2%) sold to minors (ages 15-17).

Annual noncompliance rates, by county from 1996 – 2009 are:

COUNTY	1996 %	1997 %	1998 %	1999 %	2000 %	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %	2009 %	# stores inspected 2009
Honolulu	51.0	21.6	12.8	16.1	8.3	5.9	4.2	4.9	6.3	6.3	5.3	6.8	15.5	7.4	242
Hawaii	28.9	39.4	44.4	1.9	6.8	10.0	25.0	14.3	0.0	6.9	9.7	17.2	5.0	2.1	47
Kauai	5.0	21.1	5.7	4.7	4.8	10.0	0.0	9.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	16.7	0.0	10.5	19
Maui	37.0	20.0	13.8	1.8	2.4	14.3	0.0	3.7	6.9	3.1	7.4	6.7	0.0	2.1	48
State-wide	44.5	23.0	15.0	11.3	7.0	7.7	6.0	6.2	5.3	5.6	5.9	8.7	11.2	6.2	356

The significant factors associated with a minor’s ability to purchase tobacco were:

- 1) Whether the clerk requested identification or age – 63% of clerks who did not ask the minor for age or identification sold tobacco to minors.
- 2) Whether the clerk requested identification – 32.1% of clerks who did not ask the minor for identification sold tobacco to minors.
- 3) Whether the minor was able to pick up cigarettes without having to talk to the clerk – 27.3% of clerks sold tobacco to minors when the minor was able to pick up cigarettes without having to talk to the clerk.

Requesting identification has been the strongest factor with sales and continues to be a key recommendation. However, it is noteworthy that of the 22 stores that sold, 5 (22.7%) asked for ID and chose to sell tobacco to a youth who did not produce identification. An additional recommendation is to educate clerks to enforce the rule NO ID, NO SALE.