



News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 29, 2009
PH09-85

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TOBACCO SALES TO MINORS FALL TO ALL-TIME LOW

SACRAMENTO – Announcing that fewer California stores are selling cigarettes to minors, Dr. Mark Horton, director of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), today announced the findings of a CDPH survey on tobacco sales.

“I’m very pleased to see the continued drop in tobacco sales to minors,” said Horton, noting that the rate of illegal tobacco sales to minors dropped from 12.6 percent in 2008 to a record low of 8.6 percent in 2009 ([sales chart](#)). “There is simply no reason why minors should be able to buy tobacco products.”

CDPH’s 2009 Youth Tobacco Purchase Survey further showed this rate is a historical low from 37 percent in 1995, when the state first started monitoring the illegal sales to minors. Retail stores commonly associated with the selling of tobacco products, such as grocery, drug, tobacco, liquor, or gas stations, sold at an all-time low of 8.5 percent. Drugstores/pharmacies had the lowest rate of illegal sales a 2.3 percent. Despite the overall drop in illegal sales statewide, the survey found sales in certain retail outlets remain high. Non-traditional retail stores, such as doughnut shops, discount stores, or deli/meat markets, were found on average to sell tobacco to minors at 13 percent. The highest rate of illegal sales occurred at doughnut shops at 21.6 percent and tobacco shops at 21.1 percent.

“Seventy-four percent of current adult smokers began smoking at or before the age of 18,” added Horton. “With this in mind, we encourage all retailers to put an end to illegal sales to minors, and encourage those who witness it to report it to the manager or anonymously through the statewide hotline.”

The decline is attributed to a variety of factors including the increased price of cigarettes, strong local tobacco retailers licensing laws, state and local enforcement plus ongoing public education via media ads placed on television and on major motion picture DVDs. The California Stop Tobacco Access to Kids Enforcement Act requires that tobacco retailers post a warning sign at each point-of-sale stating that selling tobacco to persons under 18 years of age is illegal and subject to penalties. Customers may call (1-800-5 ASK-4-ID) to report underage tobacco sales.

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