



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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NEWS RELEASE

Dec. 29, 2015

15-064

NEW TOBACCO PREVENTION AND CONTROL LAWS GO INTO EFFECT JANUARY 1

HONOLULU – The Hawaii State Department of Health wants to remind the public that, effective Jan. 1, 2016, you must be at least age 21 to buy tobacco products and electronic smoking devices (e-cigarettes) in Hawaii. Hawaii is the first state in the nation to raise the minimum age for tobacco sales to 21. A second measure, which also goes into effect on Jan. 1, incorporates e-cigarettes into Hawaii’s smoke-free laws, meaning that the use of e-cigarettes is now prohibited where smoking and/or using tobacco products is already banned.

“We are proud to once again be at the forefront of the nation in tobacco prevention and control,” said Director of Health Virginia Pressler. “While our comprehensive approach to addressing tobacco use in Hawaii has led to quantifiable decreases in deaths due to smoking, an increase in targeted marketing to our youth and young adults and new technology in the form of e-cigarettes requires our state to take additional measures to protect our young people.”

Acts 122 and 19 were passed by the State Legislature during the 2015 session and signed into law by Governor Ige. Raising the minimum age to purchase tobacco products to 21 (Act 122) is a nationally recommended strategy. In the U.S., 95 percent of adult smokers begin smoking before the age of 21. Nearly half become regular, daily smokers before age 18, and an additional 25 percent become regular, daily smokers between ages 18 and 21. The 18 to 21 year group is therefore a time when many smokers transition to regular use of cigarettes.

The use of e-cigarettes in existing smoke-free locations can expose non-smokers and vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant women to aerosolized nicotine and other toxic substances. Act 19 protects the public from unwillingly inhaling chemicals emitted by e-cigarettes that may contain nicotine and carcinogens such as formaldehyde, metals and nitrosamines.

While smoking rates have drastically decreased among Hawaii's youth and adults, there has been a recent and rapid increase in e-cigarette use. Only 5 percent of Hawaii public high school students reported trying e-cigarettes in 2011 versus 22 percent in 2014, representing a 344 percent increase in e-cigarette use in just four years. Among middle school students, e-cigarette use jumped 542 percent during the same time period, from 2 percent in 2011 to 12 percent in 2014. Adult e-cigarette use was 20 percent in 2014.

"Acts 122 and 19 make tobacco products including e-cigarettes less accessible and less attractive to our youth," said Lola Irvin, Administrator for the Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Division. "Prevention is the best strategy, and youth are especially vulnerable to nicotine addiction. By prohibiting their use in public places, the new laws encourage a no-smoking norm."

The timing of these new laws coincides with the start of 2016, an ideal time to make and keep New Year's resolutions to quit using tobacco products and/or e-cigarettes. If you are over 18 and need help quitting tobacco or e-cigarettes, contact the Hawaii Tobacco Quitline at 1-800-QUIT-NOW or go to hawaiiquitline.org to connect with a quit coach and receive nicotine replacement therapy, free of charge.

For more information about the new tobacco control laws, including new signage for retailers, please visit: <http://health.hawaii.gov/tobacco/home/retail/>.

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