

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Governor Brown signs bill to increase age to purchase tobacco to 21

Guidelines outlined for tobacco retailers to comply with new law

In Coos County, 12% of 11th graders are smoking cigarettes and 21% of 11th graders are using non-cigarette tobacco such as cigarillos, chewing tobacco, or electronic cigarettes.

Oregon Governor Kate Brown's signing this week of a new law that raises the required minimum age to legally buy or obtain tobacco products, from 18 to 21, caps a year-long celebration of 20 years of tobacco prevention successes in the state.

Gov. Brown signed SB 754, known as Tobacco 21, recently the Oregon Legislature making Oregon the fifth state to increase the age to purchase tobacco; after California, Hawaii, Maine and New Jersey. The new law takes effect immediately, with enforcement and fines to begin Jan. 1, 2018.

"The passage of Tobacco 21 is a tremendous accomplishment for public health in this state, and the young people of Oregon," said Oregon Health Authority Public Health Division Director Lillian Shirley. "Tobacco 21 is an evidence-based strategy that will help reduce youth initiation of tobacco. We know that most addiction to tobacco starts in adolescence—in fact, nine of 10 adults who smoke report that they started smoking before they turned 18 and almost 100 percent start before they turn 26." She added, "We need to protect kids with laws such as Tobacco 21 because new marketing tactics and products with hookahs, e-cigarettes and flavored vaping products put a new generation at risk of addiction."

There's still work left to be done in Coos County.

There are still tobacco prevention challenges in Coos County to help prevent future generations from starting to use tobacco. In Coos County 97% of tobacco retailers sold flavored tobacco products. More than 50% display tobacco near toys or candy. Tobacco retail licensure that prohibits marketing that targets our youth will further protect Coos Counties young people.

Coos County has taken several positive steps to help reduce the impact of smoking on our county. Creating some smoke free parks and family events helps to protect from second hand smoke. There is no safe level of exposure to second hand smoke and further steps can inspire us to claim, create and enjoy spaces that are 100% free from tobacco use. By doing so, we greatly increase our effectiveness in preventing serious diseases and saving lives in future generations.

What the law means for retailers and certified smoke shop owners:

Currently, there is no violation for people ages 18, 19, or 20 to possess tobacco products or inhalant delivery systems. Enforcement will take place at the retail locations that sell these products:

- Effective immediately, retailers and certified smoke shops can no longer sell tobacco products, inhalant delivery systems, or tobacco delivery systems to people younger than 21. There are no exceptions for sales and use of tobacco or inhalant delivery systems to persons under 21 years of age.
- Retailers and certified smoke shops that sell tobacco products or inhalant delivery systems are required to display a sign stating the prohibition of tobacco product or inhalant delivery system sales to persons younger than 21. Failure to post a sign stating this would be a Class A violation.
- Enforcement of this law goes into effect Jan. 1, 2018.

Learn More:

- Learn more by visiting:
<http://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/TOBACCPREVENTION/Pages/retailenvironment.aspx>
- Email questions to: Tobacco.Inspections@state.or.us

For more information about tobacco prevention and the work being doing in Coos County, visit <http://smokefreeoregon.com/what-you-can-do/coos-county-2/>