



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*****PRESS RELEASE*****

Eight Tobacco Retailers in Hollister Sold Tobacco Products to Youth

Hollister, CA- On June 6, 2022, five 17-18-year-old youth, conducted a youth decoy operation in Hollister. Of the 27 stores that sell tobacco products in Hollister, the youth were able to conduct a purchase transaction of tobacco at eight stores without being asked for identification to determine whether they were of age to purchase the product.

During the months leading up to the decoy operation, Hollister Code Enforcement (HCE) staff visited tobacco retailers to ensure owners and/or management had a retail license to sell tobacco products and remind them in writing of the law 308(a) (1) PC, which states it is unlawful to sell tobacco to anyone under 21 years old. Retailers were also notified that a potential decoy operation would be used to verify that retailers were abiding by these regulations. During the decoy operation the youth were instructed to purchase one tobacco product from the retailer. A violation of the city ordinance was confirmed if the cashier rang up the purchase, did not check ID and provided the tobacco product to the decoy.

According to a recent Tobacco-Free Kids survey, nearly two out of every five (38.0%) eighth graders and nearly half (48.0%) of tenth graders say cigarettes are easy for them to get. "It was as easy as just going in the store and buying a Flum Red Bang vape and Swisher Sweets cigarettes. I thought for sure I would be asked for my I.D., but it never happen", said one Hollister youth decoy.

The following retailers were in violation of the city ordinance prohibiting providing tobacco products to youth:

1. Hollister Super #1-located at 1280 Fourth Street in Hollister
2. Hollister Super #2-located at 211 Third Street in Hollister
3. Ranch Gas & Food-located at 105 San Felipe Road in Hollister
4. Shell Gas & Mini Mart-located at 490 Tres Pinos Road in Hollister
5. Smokers Paradise-located at 341 Tres Pinos Road, Suite 103B in Hollister
6. DK Chevron-located at 631 San Felipe Road in Hollister
7. Greenrush-located at 728 San Benito Street in Hollister
8. Lupita's Super Mercado-located at 889 Fourth Street in Hollister

"Thirty percent of the stores in Hollister sold to youth. To decrease this percentage, comprehensive regulations such as 308(a) (1) PC that reduce the affordability and accessibility of tobacco products **must** be enforced," said Nic Calvin, San Benito County Public Health Services Deputy Director.

Citations were issued to all eight stores for violating the city ordinance prohibiting providing tobacco products to minors. The penalty for the citation is \$250 for the first offense, \$500 for a second offense and \$1,000 for the third offense.

This decoy operation was a joint effort between Hollister Code Enforcement, San Benito County Public Health Services and members of the San Benito County Youth Coalition. Hollister Code Enforcement will continue to conduct decoy operations to increase the compliance of retailers.

For additional information related to this compliance operation please contact Hollister Code Enforcement at (831) 636-4356 or San Benito County Public Health Services at (831) 637-5367.