

Compliance Check ~ Or Not? Can YOU Tell?

By Cheryl Dudley

Facts and Stats

“A” Average for APRIL

According to Idaho Code 39-5701 the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare must inspect each business that sells tobacco to ensure that it does not sell tobacco to minors. For April 2005:

- ❖ 216 Vendors were inspected.*
- ❖ 19 Vendors sold to the inspecting minor.
- ❖ The compliance rate for the month of APRIL 2005 was 91%

*Inspections where purchase attempts were made.

Prevent the Sale Website

www.preventthesale.com/idaho

- Learn about the law
- Take the tobacco quiz
- See what the ID's look like
- Play the Game "Would You Sell to This Person?"

The young boy entered the small convenient store with an aggressive air. His dark disheveled hair hung over his eyes and his sleeveless black t-shirt looked as if he'd had it on for several days. His eyes peered out through parted strands of hair as he slowly walked the aisles, his dirty jeans scuffing the floor as he shuffled along. His small, stiff stature vibed with rebellion and the night clerk shifted her weight and tried to look busy while keeping her eye on the boy. She reached up to dust the cigarettes, adjust the tubes of chap stick on the counter, rearrange the pens—all the time trying to pretend that she wasn't watching the boy while she really was.

She watched him reach down and pick up a package of honey peanuts and look closely at the small print, then toss it back down in the bin as if disgusted at its ingredients. He shoved his hands in his pockets and took several more minutes to look over the other candy products, then finally strolled over to the refrigerator and forcefully yanked out a bottle of Mountain Dew.

As he walked towards the check-out counter, he avoided looking at the clerk. She noticed that the muscles on his arms were tense and he seemed as nervous as her, except she was hiding it better.

"Is this everything?" she asked the boy as she rang up the bottle of Mountain Dew.

"Give me a pack of Camels," he said, trying to make his voice sound deeper than it was, she thought.

"Can I see your ID please," the clerk asked, her mind racing to remember what her employer had said last week in their training meeting.

"I - um, left it at my friend's house, but I'm 18," the boy said.

"I'm sorry, but I have to see a valid

ID to sell you tobacco products. It's the law, and I could get into a lot of trouble. Why don't you go get your ID, then come back?"

By now another customer had strolled into the store, adding a small sense of security to the clerk. This wasn't the first time she had refused the sale of tobacco to a minor, but this particular boy seemed more menacing than most—more angry. She was unsure how he would react, but she was committed to refusing the sale.

"Look," she said in a quiet tone, "I care about kids, and I can't sell them tobacco. Just think about that."

Without a word, the boy turned and left the store. She never saw him again, but she later entertained the idea that he may have been part of a compliance inspection team. She wondered how she could tell.



How Can You Tell?

Well—you can't tell if the minor who approaches you to buy cigarettes is part of an inspection team or not. That's the whole idea. And the only way you will know if the minor is part of the inspection team is if you sell tobacco to him/her because you will promptly be issued a violation and will have to pay a stiff fine. It's important that you request an ID, know

Compliance Check Continued....

what a valid ID should look like, and refuse the sale of tobacco to any person who does not have a valid ID.

To prevent the sale of tobacco to a minor, remember:

- Ask for the customer's ID
- Inspect the ID for its shape and color coding
- If its GREEN, stop the teen—this customer is under 18 and cannot buy tobacco
- If it's RED, use your head—the customer is over 18 but under 21 and can buy tobacco, but not alcohol.

Note from a High School Smoker

I sometimes wonder how I survived childhood. No bicycle helmets, no seatbelt laws, walking several blocks to school unattended. Authorities today might pronounce my parents unfit, yet they were no different than most parents then. Before we realized how dangerous and life-threatening our normal, everyday activities were, we had no fear.

The morning I woke up with mumps, my mother laughed at my swollen glands instead of offering me comfort. When I came down with the red measles, she made me stay indoors in a dark room and drink a disgusting homemade concoction of sugar and onions. We never went to a doctor until my sister fell off her horse and her elbow ended up in the front of her arm instead of the back. In high school, the cool thing was to drive our cars through harvested wheat fields at night with the headlights turned off.

How did we survive?

Back then my father smoked Lucky Strike cigarettes—the ones without the filter. It was no surprise that before long I was testing out the leftover cigarette

butts he left in the ashtrays around the house. My mother, who claimed proudly to have a nose like a Beagle, would yell up the stairs at me to stop smoking as I hung out the window and wondered how in the world she always knew. My interest in cigarettes was more for the image I wanted to portray than for any physical enjoyment they gave. As a matter of fact, the cigarettes burned my lungs and gave me a headache, but that was not nearly as important as my desire to be cool.

Before long my best friend and I were sneaking into the local service station bathroom over our school lunch hour to practice inhaling and blowing smoke rings. We started smoking Virginia Slims, saving up our allowance every week to purchase them in the local vending machines for fifty cents a pack.

Cigarette ads were everywhere then. The Marlboro Man was the sexiest guy on the planet, and the women who smoked Virginia Slims the skinniest and most beautiful. We all wanted to be like her, and marry him. We ignored the tiny disclaimer on the packages that warned us of the danger of smoking and most of us somehow survived our dangerous childhoods.

I recently read an article that said had we known the health risks of tobacco; cigarettes would have never been invented. Obviously something so dangerous would never pass our safety tests for new inventions today. But now that we have tobacco products in our lives, they can't be banned without violating our freedom to smoke.

Educating youth about the dangerous health risks associated with smoking, and preventing the sale of tobacco to underage teens has made great progress in decreasing the number of teens who start smoking.

Had cigarettes not been as available to me as a teen, I would not have smoked back then. The increased prices as well as strict ID checks are essential to **preventing the sale**. As a tobacco vendor or clerk, your role is vitally important in this process.

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