

The High Cost of Smoking

By Cheryl Dudley

Money to Smoke

Do you have money to smoke?

If the physical costs of smoking aren't enough to convince smokers to quit, perhaps knowing the financial cost will provide an extra motivation, particularly for teens who don't come by money nearly as easy as adults who hold down jobs to pay for their vices.

The average cost of a pack of cigarettes averages \$4.49, including taxes. Using this number, a pack-a-day smoker burns through about \$31.43 per week, or \$1,635 per year. A 40-year-old who would quit smoking and put the savings into a 401(k) earning 9% a year would have nearly \$250,000 by age 70. A teen who quit smoking could spend their savings on a new car.

Adults who smoke also tend to pay more for health insurance. Life insurance policies for smokers skyrocket compared to non-smokers. Smokers also pay more for dry cleaning and teeth cleaning and lose money on the resale value of their cars and homes because of damage by cigarette smoke. Employers prefer to hire non-smokers and some companies even fire employees for smoking, although some states have laws to protect smokers' rights.

Furthermore, according to the Centers for Disease Control, each pack of cigarettes in Idaho costs more than \$7.00 in health care costs and lost productivity. Every year 1,500 lives are lost in Idaho due to smoking-related health problems at a cost to the state of \$319 million in healthcare costs.

In Idaho, 15.8 percent of high school students smoke and every year 1,700 more of our youngsters become regular smokers. Tobacco companies spend \$57 million per year to sell cigarettes in Idaho; a fraction of what it costs us in healthcare.

Physical Barriers

Remember that cigarettes products must be displayed behind a counter where customers don't have direct access to them. A physical barrier must exist between the customer and the tobacco products.

Customers are not allowed to handle unpurchased tobacco products; in other words, the clerk cannot hand unpurchased cigarettes to a customer and have the customer carry them to a different cashier to pay.

Idaho Couple Convicted

An Idaho man was sentenced to 33 months in prison last October for selling contraband cigarettes. His wife was sentenced to six months house arrest and three years probation and her brother was also sentenced to two years probation for his part in the trafficking scheme.

Peter and Peggy Mahoney of Worley, Idaho, were convicted in federal court as ringleaders in a conspiracy that is said to have cost Washington State as much as \$7 million in lost cigarette tax revenue. The Mahoney's hired Peggy's brother, Mark Van't Hul, to deliver contraband cigarettes from the Warpath Smoke Shop on the Coeur d'Alene Indian Reservation to the Puyallup Reservation in western Washington.

Is Your Training Effective?

In order to avoid a violation of Idaho law, vendors need to continually evaluate their employee training and effectiveness. Employees can do their job well only if store policies and procedures and the standards and consequences of selling to minors are clear.

Be Ready for Compliance Checks!

The law requires that at least one random compliance check take place per vendor per year in the state of Idaho plus additional checks based on the non-compliance rate for the previous year. The total number of inspections that the law requires is equal to the number of permitted businesses multiplied by the percentage of the previous years' violations multiplied by ten. Sound complicated?

All you need to remember is that each vendor will likely be inspected at least twice a year no sooner than 30 days apart. If the business fails the inspection, the clerk is cited on the spot and the vendor is notified by mail of the violation. If the clerk refuses to sell tobacco to the minor, the minor leaves the establishment without further incident and the vendor is notified by mail that his business was successfully passed an inspection.

Remember that the violation takes place at the point of sale. In other words, the business will fail the inspection at the moment the tobacco is sold to the minor. The clerk or vendor is not allowed to try and retrieve the tobacco, confiscate the minor's ID, or detain the minor in any way. After the minor has left the establishment, the inspector will identify himself/herself and issue the citation.

It is important to commit your business to preventing the sale of tobacco to minors. Compliance checks are an inevitable part of selling tobacco. Fewer non-compliance violations will reduce the number of compliance checks next year. But most importantly, it will reduce the number of Idaho kids who have access to tobacco.

Do the short winter days get you down? If so, cheer up, because starting the third week of January, the days really start to lengthen. By the end of February, sunset will be 5:47 p.m.—more than 20 minutes longer than February 1. By March 31, sunset will be 7:12 p.m.



VOLUME 07, NUMBER 2 February 2008

**Prevent
the Sale!**

Newsletter for Idaho
Tobacco Retailers

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE

PAID
PERMIT NO.XXX
Boise, ID

What's Inside:

- * Money to Smoke
- * Tobacco Barriers
- * Compliance Check Reminders
- * Longer Days on the way!

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