

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

**News Release**

**LINDA LINGLE**  
GOVERNOR

---

CHIYOME LEINAALA FUKINO M.D.  
DIRECTOR  
Phone: (808) 586-4410  
Fax: (808) 586-4444

---

For Immediate Release: September 21, 2007

07-67

**HAWAII TOBACCO SALES TO MINORS REMAIN LOW**

HONOLULU – Hawai`i's tobacco sales to minors are among the lowest in the nation. This year's survey by the Department of Health's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) shows sales continue to be low across the state. The joint program, with the University of Hawai`i's Cancer Research Center of Hawai`i and ADAD, conducts inspections of retail outlets that sell tobacco to determine the extent of illegal sales of tobacco products to minors.

"This is about making it harder for kids to get cigarettes and sending a consistent message that helps reduce underage smoking in Hawai`i," said Lt. Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona Jr. "Despite the fact that it is illegal to sell cigarettes to minors, approximately 9 percent of 230 convenience stores, grocery stores, gas stations and pharmacies surveyed across the state sold cigarettes to young people under 18 this year. We have one of the lowest noncompliance rates in the nation, but our focus must be on how we can improve our situation here in Hawai`i."

In the Spring of 2007, teams made up of youth volunteers ages 15 – 17 and adult observers visited a random sample of 232 stores in which the youth attempted to buy cigarettes to determine how well retailers were complying with state tobacco laws. Twenty stores (8.7 percent) sold to minors, compared to last year's 5.9 percent rate.

"Although statistically it is not considered a significant increase, even a small noncompliance rate is of concern," stated Deputy Director of Behavioral Health Michelle Hill. "Eighty percent of smokers in the United States began before the age of 18. Restricting youth access to tobacco is an important part of Hawai`i's comprehensive strategy for keeping smoking rates down."

The 2007 non-compliance rates around the State are 17.2 percent for the County of Hawai'i, 16.7 percent for the County of Kaua'i, 6.8 percent for the City and County of Honolulu, and 6.7 percent for Maui County. In Hawai'i and Kaua'i Counties, there was a significant increase in their rates, 9.7 percent to 17.2 percent and 0 percent to 16.7 percent, respectively.

Retailers and clerks can help keep tobacco out of the hands of minors by asking for identification or age. Of the clerks who did not ask for age or identification, 89 percent sold tobacco to minors, according to the survey. Retailers can also place cigarettes in a place where customers have to ask for them. In the survey, 83 percent of clerks sold tobacco to minors when the minor was able to pick up cigarettes without having to talk to the clerk.

"Hawai'i has a comprehensive tobacco prevention strategy with an aggressive media campaign, surveillance program, a network of partners, extensive merchant education, and a print campaign that recognizes local merchants who comply and do not comply with the underage tobacco sales law," stated Hill. "Strengthening these things are integral to protecting the health of our children."

In addition to the survey inspections, the DOH, in cooperation with all four County Police Departments and the Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i, has a program to enforce the State law that prohibits the sale or furnishing of tobacco products to a minor under the age of 18. The enforcement program uses teenagers between the ages of 15 and 17, carrying identification, who attempt to purchase cigarettes under the supervision of an undercover police officer. Approximately 1,200 enforcement inspections are conducted every year aimed at all outlets in the State that sell tobacco. Salesclerks convicted of selling to minors face a mandatory fine of \$500.

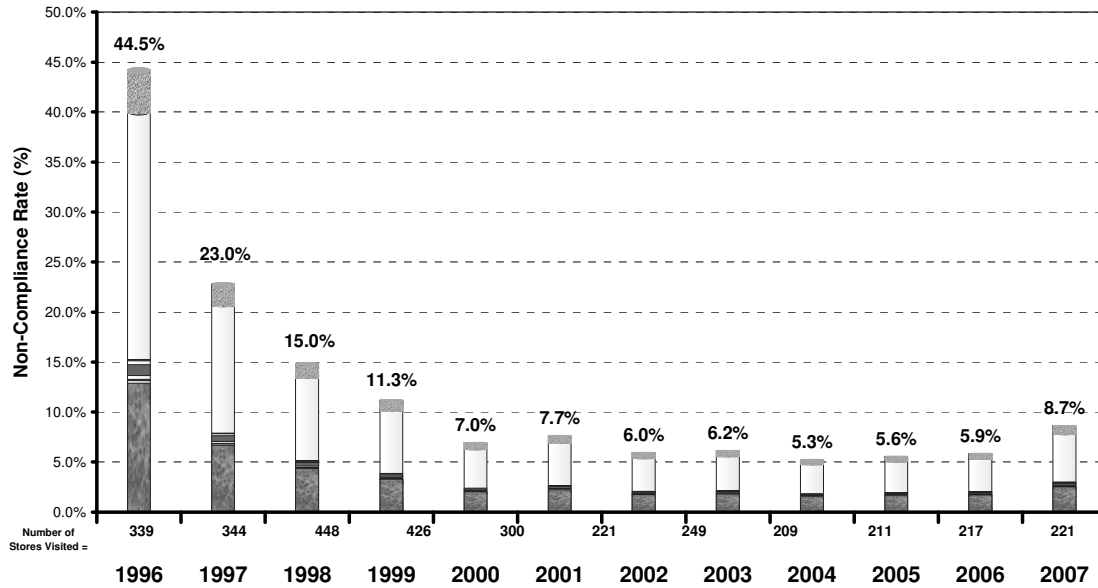
###

For more information, contact:

Keith Yamamoto, Chief  
Dept. of Health, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division  
Phone: (808) 692-7506

Travis Taylor  
Senior Advisor – Communications  
Office of the Lt. Governor  
Phone: (808) 586-0283

**State of Hawaii Tobacco Sales to Minors: Synar Inspections**



Annual survey inspection noncompliance rates, by county: 1996 - 2007

| COUNTY                 | 1996 %      | 1997 %      | 1998 %      | 1999 %      | 2000 %     | 2001 %     | 2002 %     | 2003 %     | 2004 %     | 2005 %     | 2006 %     | 2007 %     | # stores inspected 2007 |
|------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------------------|
| Honolulu               | 51.0        | 21.6        | 12.8        | 16.1        | 8.3        | 5.9        | 4.2        | 4.9        | 6.3        | 6.3        | 5.3        | 6.8        | 161                     |
| Hawaii                 | 28.9        | 39.4        | 44.4        | 1.9         | 6.8        | 10.0       | 25.0       | 14.3       | 0.0        | 6.9        | 9.7        | 17.2       | 29                      |
| Kauai                  | 5.0         | 21.1        | 5.7         | 4.7         | 4.8        | 10.0       | 0.0        | 9.1        | 0.0        | 0.0        | 0.0        | 16.7       | 12                      |
| Maui                   | 37.0        | 20.0        | 13.8        | 1.8         | 2.4        | 14.3       | 0.0        | 3.7        | 6.9        | 3.1        | 7.4        | 6.7        | 30                      |
| <b>State of Hawaii</b> | <b>44.5</b> | <b>23.0</b> | <b>15.0</b> | <b>11.3</b> | <b>7.0</b> | <b>7.7</b> | <b>6.0</b> | <b>6.2</b> | <b>5.3</b> | <b>5.6</b> | <b>5.9</b> | <b>8.7</b> | <b>232</b>              |