



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: July 16, 2008

**HAWAI'I TOBACCO SALES TO MINORS RISE WHILE YOUTH
SMOKING RATES DECLINE**

HONOLULU -- This year's survey by the Hawai'i State Department of Health's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD) shows that illegal sales of tobacco to minors in Hawai'i has increased from 8.7 percent in 2007 to 11.2 percent in 2008. At the current rate, Hawai'i is above the national average of 10.5 percent. The 13th annual survey was conducted by a joint program with the University of Hawai'i's Cancer Research Center of Hawai'i and ADAD. The program conducts inspections of retail outlets that sell tobacco to determine the extent of illegal sales of tobacco products to minors.

"Keeping tobacco out of the hands of our youth is a critical part of reducing underage smoking in Hawai'i," said Lt. Governor James R. "Duke" Aiona, Jr. "While most Hawai'i clerks are doing a good job at checking IDs and not selling tobacco to our keiki, we need all store clerks and merchants to ask anyone who looks younger than 30 for their ID. Fortunately, even though sales of tobacco to minors have been rising, tobacco use by minors is still declining."

In the Spring of 2008, teams made up of youth volunteers (ages 15-17) and adult observers visited a random sample of 304 stores statewide in which the youth attempted to buy cigarettes to determine how well retailers were complying with the state tobacco laws. Thirty-four stores (11.2%) sold to minors (ages 15-17).

Of the four counties included in the 2008 statewide survey, Honolulu County had the highest rate (15.5%). Within Honolulu County the area with the highest rate was the Windward region (31.8%). The County of Hawai'i had a rate of 5.0 percent. The Counties of Maui and Kauai had rates of 0 percent. The County of Honolulu had a significant increase from last year's rate of 6.8% to this year's rate of 15.5

(more)

percent. The Counties of Hawai'i, Maui and Kauai had significant decreases in their rates over the last year from 17.2% to 5.0%, 6.7% to 0.0% and 16.7% to 0.0%, 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, 88.2 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, 75 percent of clerks sold tobacco to minors when the minor was able to pick up cigarettes without having to talk to the clerk.

In contrast to the survey results for sales of tobacco to minors, Hawai'i's rate of smoking among students in grades nine through 12 continues to significantly decline with 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) rates for "students who smoked at least one cigarette in the past 30 days" at 12.8 percent. This represents a decline of more than half the rate in 1999 which was 27.9 percent. Hawai'i's 2007 rate is also well below the national rate of 20 percent. The YRBS is conducted every two years in public schools statewide.

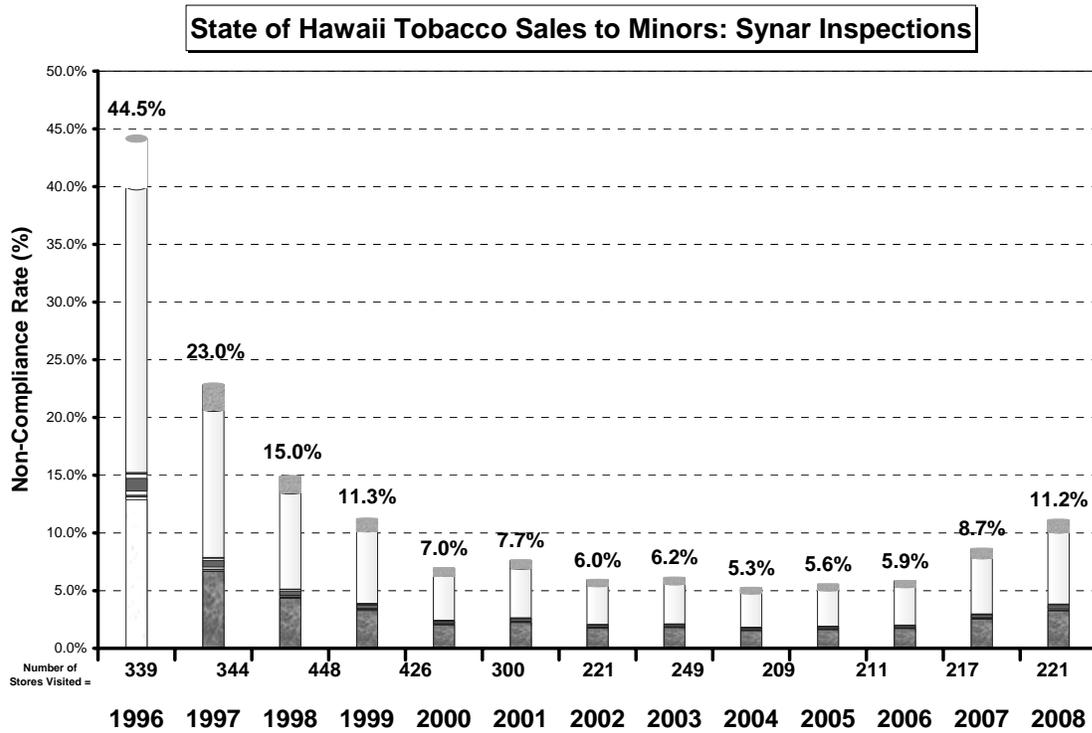
"Through the Master Settlement Agreement, Hawai'i has been able to use Tobacco Settlement funds to conduct a comprehensive tobacco prevention strategy that includes an aggressive media campaign, surveillance program, network of partners, and merchant education," said Dr. Chiyome Fukino, Director of Health. "The Department of Health will continue to conduct programs to educate merchants and clerks about the need to verify the age of customers who purchase tobacco."

In addition to 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 ages 15-17, 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, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division
Phone: (808) 692-7506

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



Background information:

A Federal law known as the “1992 Synar Amendment” requires all 50 states to enact and enforce laws that prohibit the sale or distribution of tobacco products to youth under age 18. States are also required to annually conduct random, unannounced inspections and document a rate of tobacco sales to minors of no more than 20%.

Annual noncompliance rates, by county from 1996 – 2008 are:

COUNTY	1996 %	1997 %	1998 %	1999 %	2000 %	2001 %	2002 %	2003 %	2004 %	2005 %	2006 %	2007 %	2008 %	# stores inspected 2008
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	15.5	207
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	5.0	40
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	0.0	40
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	0.0	17
State-wide	44.5	23.0	15.0	11.3	7.0	7.7	6.0	6.2	5.3	5.6	5.9	8.7	11.2	304