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Tobacco industry still recruiting Oregon teens as 'replacement smokers'

*Surgeon General report shows companies are continuing tactics
that draw young people, Public Health officials say*

PORTLAND, Ore.—The Oregon Health Authority's Public Health Division is hailing a new Surgeon General's report exposing the tobacco industry's efforts to market to youth, causing more than 20 Oregon teenagers to start smoking every day.

The scientific report, "Preventing Tobacco Use among Youth and Young Adults," released today by Surgeon General Regina M. Benjamin, M.D., M.B.A., highlights the many ways young people are targeted by tobacco companies with low prices, youth-oriented marketing tactics, and ready availability. The report confirms that people who start smoking before age 18 are more likely to continue as adults.

"Clearly, the fight to prevent youth tobacco use is far from over. This report shows for every person who dies of a tobacco-related illness, there are two new smokers under the age of 25," says Bruce Gutelius, M.D., M.P.H., deputy state epidemiologist. "Tobacco marketing is a key factor in causing young people to start using tobacco."

Between 1998 and 2008, the tobacco industry spent more than \$125 million a year marketing its products in Oregon, according to the Federal Trade Commission — many of those dollars aiming to hook young people on tobacco products. Public health officials believe a rise in alternative forms of flavored tobacco has helped spur continued youth smoking. In a 2010 study, the state Public Health Division found that hookah lounges routinely marketed their establishments as teen- and young adult-friendly social environments. And national data show more youth are buying cigars, and those cigars are more likely to be flavored.

(cont.)

Results from the Oregon Healthy Teens Survey shows the industry's marketing efforts have paid off:

- Roughly three-quarters of eighth- and 11th-graders report having seen store advertisements for cigarettes in the past month.
- Among Oregon eighth-graders who don't currently smoke, four out of 10 are likely to start smoking during their teen years.
- Although smoking has declined by 54 percent among eighth-graders and 46 percent among 11th-graders since 1996, about 20 Oregon kids take up smoking every day.

The Surgeon General's report also calls out the importance of local and state tobacco control programs for reducing tobacco use among teens and young adults. According to the report, these programs play a critical role by making it more difficult for teens and young adults to buy tobacco products, and reducing the number of places where they can use or be exposed to tobacco smoke.

Young people also enjoy protection from secondhand smoke because of Oregon's Smokefree Workplace Law. Throughout Oregon, local governments and colleges are strengthening the Indoor Clean Air Act by creating other smoke-free and tobacco-free outdoor spaces and places where kids hang out, including at parks, fairs, playgrounds and concert venues.

The Surgeon General's report highlights the strong evidence that raising the price of tobacco, such as by banning tobacco product coupons and discounts, keeps price-sensitive young people from buying cigarettes. Every 10 percent increase in the price results in a 6 percent decrease in youth smoking prevalence, according to the national Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

Despite progress in reducing tobacco use, it remains the leading cause of preventable death in Oregon, accounting for about 7,000 deaths each year. Oregonians spent nearly \$2.4 billion in 2009 for direct medical expenditures and indirect costs due to premature death from tobacco use.

"We must continue to do all we can to ensure that young people don't start smoking, because we know that the younger someone starts, the harder it is for him or her to quit," Gutelius said. "We can't afford to have another generation addicted to tobacco."

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