

Tobacco sales to Indiana minors in annual inspection hit all-time low

February 15 2011, By Aaron Jones



Tobacco sales to minors hit an all-time low.

Tobacco product sales to teens assisting with the annual Tobacco Retailer Inspection Program (TRIP) in Indiana hit a new all-time low last year, with sales occurring during 3.8 percent of more than 8,400 inspections.

TRIP is a joint venture of the Indiana Prevention Resource Center (IPRC) at Indiana University Bloomington and the Indiana State Excise Police.

"Once again the success of year-round, statewide inspections is clear with the new low in sales," said Aaron Jones, TRIP operations coordinator at the IPRC, which is part of IU's School of Health, Physical Education and Recreation. "TRIP's presence across the state is being felt

at the retail level, and TRIP officers continue to reach out and educate retailers on responsible tobacco sales."

In Indiana it is illegal for a clerk or a retail establishment to sell [tobacco products](#) to anyone under the age of 18.

The 2010 inspection results by tobacco type sold to TRIP youth continue to be similar to those from 2009. The youth request cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, or cigars during each inspection. Cigars were asked for the least, but had the highest sales rate. When cigars were asked for by a youth, they were sold 5.6 percent of the time. Cigarettes were requested most frequently, but stores only sold to the youth 2.7 percent of the time.

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"TRIP is continuing to work together with retailers to ensure they are asking for ID and verifying the age on young customers," Jones said. "It does not matter what type of tobacco a youth asks for, clerks need to be vigilant at all times."

Indiana is divided into 13 inspection districts; each has an inspection team made up of a police officer, an adult assistant and a youth assistant. During TRIP inspections, teens enter stores under the observation of the adult or officer and attempt to buy a tobacco product -- usually cigarettes, but sometimes smokeless tobacco if it is a popular product in the area, or cigars. The teens do not carry their ID and never lie to the clerk. If the youth is successful with the purchase, the TRIP officer issues a notice of violation to the clerk and to the store. Fines for stores with violations range from \$200 to \$1,000 depending on the number of previous store violations.

When TRIP inspections began in 2000, 40 percent of retailers were found to have sold tobacco to minors, and the state saw six consecutive

years of decline until 2007's slight increase. The downward trend in [tobacco](#) sales to youth resumed in 2008 and continued with last year's record low.

Provided by Indiana University

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