

FDA, DOJ form task force to fight illegal vapes

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The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced Monday that it has joined up with the Department of Justice and several other federal agencies to do more to stop the sale of illegal e-cigarettes in this country.

In launching the newly created [task force](#), the FDA aims "to coordinate and streamline efforts to bring all available criminal and civil tools to bear against the illegal distribution and sale of e-cigarettes responsible for nicotine addiction among American youth," the agency said in a [news release](#).

"Enforcement against illegal e-cigarettes is a multi-pronged issue that necessitates a multi-pronged response," Dr. Brian King, director of the FDA's Center for Tobacco Products, explained in the release. "This 'All Government' approach—including the creation of this new task force—will bring the collective resources and experience of the federal government to bear on this pressing public health issue."

Anti-smoking groups welcomed the news.

"The creation of this task force can be an important step in preventing youth use of e-cigarettes, which are endangering the health and well-being of young people," Yolonda Richardson, president and CEO of the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, said in a statement.

"We encourage the Administration to take an aggressive approach in clearing the market of illegal [e-cigarette](#) products, which the public health community has been requesting consistently and most recently urged in a letter to the relevant agencies tasked with enforcement."

To date, the FDA has only [authorized the sale](#) of 23 tobacco-flavored e-cigarette products and devices. The agency added that it has also sent more than 1,100 warning letters to manufacturers, importers, distributors and retailers for selling and/or distributing unauthorized new tobacco products.

Not only that, but the agency noted it has filed civil money penalty complaints against more than 55 manufacturers and 140 retailers of

unauthorized vaping products.

Last but not least, the FDA and the Justice Department have obtained injunctions against six manufacturers to stop them from making and selling unauthorized vaping products.

Still, thousands of these products continue to flow into the United States, mostly from China, the *Associated Press* reported.

The task force announcement comes two days before a [Senate hearing](#) will tackle the issue, the AP reported.

The multi-agency task force was first proposed by outside experts in 2022 as part of a [scathing report](#) analyzing the FDA's tobacco program.

While public health groups want the agency to more aggressively police illegal flavored e-cigarettes that appeal to teenagers, [tobacco companies](#) complain the agency won't approve newer e-cigarettes that might actually help adults quit smoking.

Despite sending hundreds of warning letters to makers of illegal vapes, FDA officials noted that they are having to rely on the Justice Department to bring lawsuits against bad actors, the AP reported.

In the Monday announcement, the Justice Department signaled its continued commitment to that effort.

"The Justice Department is committed to enforcing the laws that prevent the sale and distribution of unlawful e-cigarettes," Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Brian Boynton, head of the agency's Civil Division, said in the FDA news release. "We will work closely with our Task Force partners to address this crisis with all of the enforcement tools available to us."

More information: The CDC has more on [e-cigarettes](#).

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