



**COUNTY OF RIVESIDE
COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENCY
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Deadline for Tobacco License

Riverside County Department of Public Health announced today that merchants who continue to retail tobacco, tobacco products and/or tobacco paraphernalia after February 17, 2006 without a valid Riverside County tobacco license issued by the department of Public Health, face serious penalties including loss of product, fines, and restrictions on obtaining a license in the future. This requirement affects all tobacco retailers in the unincorporated areas of the County and the city of Corona.

Passed unanimously on September 13, 2005 by the Riverside County Board of Supervisors, ordinance #838 requires a license of all who sell tobacco in the unincorporated areas of the county. The city of Corona adopted the identical ordinance in October and deferred to the County for oversight and enforcement. It is expected that in the next few months all cities will adopt this ordinance and there will be a uniform regulation governing the sale of tobacco in all areas of Riverside County. This measure and ones similar to it, in over 50 cities and counties in the state of California, are aimed at reducing the sale of tobacco to minors. According to surveys and undercover sting operations conducted by the State Food and Drug Branch, Riverside County had one of the highest rates of sales to minors in the state over the past few years. "We are not going to win the war on tobacco by developing better treatments for lung cancer. We are going to win it by keeping a generation of kids from starting to smoke," according to Susan Harrington, Director of the Department of Public Health. "We feel this ordinance will, over the next 2 years reduce the number of packs of cigarettes sold to 12-17 year olds by 80-90% in Riverside County. Our ultimate goal is of course to reduce that figure to zero," said Harrington. Current estimates indicate 5 million packs of cigarettes are sold each year to minors in Riverside County. Recent state figures have shown that Riverside County's sales to minor's rate was 44%, with the city of Riverside having a rate of 65%. "Requiring a license to sell tobacco has been shown to be an effective way to reduce the illegal sale of tobacco to minors," according to Robert Peterson, Director of the Tobacco Licensing Program at the Department of Public Health. "If a merchant is convicted of selling tobacco to anyone under the age of 18, that license can be revoked for a period of time even on the first offense. Since many tobacco retailers do thousands of dollars in legal tobacco sales each month, there is great motivation not to jeopardize that license by occasionally selling to minors," said Peterson.

For further information call (951) 358-7157, or visit the website at www.rivcoph.org/healthed/license.htm