

El Dorado merchants less likely to let minors buy tobacco

A recent survey conducted in El Dorado County showed that fewer merchants are willing to sell tobacco products to minors compared to just two years ago. Of the 100 tobacco retailers surveyed countywide, only 11 stores sold tobacco products to youth, resulting in a sales rate of 11 percent. In March of 2010, a similar survey resulted in a sales rate of 14.5 percent.

The Youth Tobacco Purchase Survey, conducted by the El Dorado County Tobacco Use Prevention Program in partnership with the Sheriff's Office, Placerville Police Department and South Lake Tahoe Police Department, was designed to see how easily minors could purchase cigarettes and chewing tobacco from local retailers. Youth volunteers aged 14-17 years old from the Sheriff's Explorer Post 457 and the police departments were trained in the survey protocols prior to their participation.

California law prohibits the sale of tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18. Tobacco retailers are required to check identification to verify age and to post state-mandated age-of-sale warning signs.

"We're pleased with the results of the survey," said Christy White, Project Director with the El Dorado County Tobacco Use Prevention Program, in a statement. "We've shown that merchant education and compliance activities encourage merchants to comply with the law."

To report illegal sales to minors, members of the public can call (800) 5-ASK-4-ID (527.5443).

– Lake Tahoe News staff report

