EMERGING PRODUCT: ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES

Over the last decade, the tobacco industry has developed novel products targeting a new generation of tobacco users. One such product that has increased in use and advertising is electronic cigarettes, or e-cigarettes. According to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), an e-cigarette is a battery powered device that allows users to inhale an emission containing nicotine or other substances. The safety of these devices is still unknown, and initial studies have found carcinogens and toxic chemicals in the emissions produced by these products, including ingredients used to make antifreeze. The FDA has not found e-cigarettes to be safe and effective in helping smokers quit and has proposed regulations that will extend basic regulatory authority found in the Tobacco Control Act to e-cigarettes.

In fact, new evidence indicates that kids may be at-risk users of electronic cigarettes. E-cigarettes are often available in flavors that may appeal to children and teens, including cotton candy, bubble gum, chocolate, strawberry and mint. There are almost 470 different brands of e-cigarettes on the market today, and e-cigarettes come in 7,700 different flavors. Demonstrating that this has become an appealing product for kids, youth usage rates for electronic cigarettes have tripled, with a recent study reporting that more teens use electronic cigarettes than traditional, tobacco cigarettes or any other tobacco product.

California cities and counties have taken note of these concerns and proactively moved to regulate e-cigarettes, passing ordinances to capture these products in secondhand smoke and tobacco retailer licensing laws. In 2014, 75 cities and counties recognized the harmful effects of these unregulated products in their communities, and implemented local policies to protect their residents. This is a sharp increase from previous years. The cities and counties who have taken action on e-cigarettes in 2014 and in prior years receive a bonus point in the Emerging Issues section in the revised methodology. Cities can earn one point for including e-cigarettes in their secondhand smoke laws and one point for regulating the sale of e-cigarettes.

Electronic Cigarette Policies Implemented by Cities and Counties

3. See Appendix A for the list of all the cities and counties who have enacted e-cigarette policies.