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Frederick County Health Department

# News Release

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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## **Tobacco Merchant Sales Compliance Check Update**

**FREDERICK, MD --** In an effort to protect public health and promote health and wellness among our youth, the Frederick County Health Department's (FCHD) Merchant Sales Compliance Initiative aims to reduce youth access to alcohol and tobacco products by conducting random merchant compliance checks of businesses located in Frederick County. Funding for these activities is provided by the Maryland Department of Health.

In December 2021, the Frederick County Health Department's Merchant Sales Compliance Initiative conducted 49 tobacco sales compliance inspections. Of the 49 businesses checked, 37 passed and 12 were found in violation and issued a civil citation (which includes a \$300 fine for the first violation within two years).

[Click here](#) for the complete report of businesses checked and the results. For more information about the Frederick County Health Department, Merchant Sales Compliance Initiative call 301-600-1755 or visit:

**--more--**

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## **Page 2/ Tobacco Merchant Sales Compliance Check Update**

<https://health.frederickcountymd.gov/557/Merchant-Compliance-Initiative>

Tobacco use by youth can harm their physical health and impair healthy brain development. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, nearly 90 percent of adult smokers began smoking before age 18. Environmental strategies, including policy and enforcement efforts, are identified as effective strategies to prevent the misuse of tobacco by youth, according to the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. A compliance check is a tool to identify tobacco retail establishments that sell tobacco products, including e-cigarette products, to individuals under the age of 21. Compliance checks are effective in reducing retail access to these products.

Before compliance checks begin each fiscal year, FCHD staff conduct an educational visit with every merchant. During this visit, merchants are provided training materials for employees from the Maryland Department of Health [Maryland Responsible Tobacco Retailer Program](#); along with a letter stating the current tobacco sales laws that no person under the age of 21 may be sold tobacco products and the fines/penalties for violation of these laws. Merchants are also informed that compliance checks will occur.

In Frederick County, underage individuals assist in the execution of both alcohol and tobacco merchant compliance checks. All underage individuals possess their valid state-issued driver's license or identification card, which is provided to every merchant who asks for identification. If the merchant asks the individual their age, the individual is required to reply truthfully. All underage individuals are accompanied and observed by a plainclothes officer.

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