

Internet Cigarette Vendors' Lack of Compliance with a California State Law Designed to Prevent Tobacco Sales to Minors

When it was enacted in 2002, California's law BP § 22963 was one of the country's most stringent laws restricting minors' ability to buy cigarettes online. Its six provisions were designed to make it difficult for Internet-based cigarette vendors to sell cigarettes to minors by imposing new age verification requirements, delivery processes, minimum order sizes, and other stipulations. This study assessed vendor compliance with BP § 22963 several months after the law went into effect.

Key Findings

A researcher purchased cigarettes from 101 Internet cigarette vendors and documented the vendors' compliance with the provisions of BP § 22963.

- None of the vendors fully complied with all six provisions of the law.
- Of the six provisions, only two received any compliance at all: nearly half of the vendors complied with the requirement to not accept money orders, and nearly a quarter of vendors required a minimum purchase of two cartons, although this may have had little to do with the vendors' efforts to reduce youth access and/or comply with the law.
- No vendors complied with the other four provisions.

The study documented an extremely high noncompliance rate for BP § 22963. In the retail environment, education of merchants and enforcement of youth access laws have been successful in increasing compliance among vendors, suggesting that similar efforts may be needed to increase compliance with BP § 22963 for cigarette sales online.

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