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## 1 in 4 local retailers fail tobacco checks

*For The Reporter*

Four of 16 local businesses sold tobacco to underage youths participating in tobacco retailer compliance checks, according to a press release from the Tobacco Control Program.

Two sales took place even after identification was presented, with one of those sales occurring after the clerk swiped the ID and received a deny sale message from the cash register. Two additional sales took place with neither clerk asking for an ID, according to the release.

Each of the four retailers was issued a citation.

"Four sales out of 16 may sound like a good outcome, but that means four youth could have been sold tobacco and could be on the road to a lifetime of addiction," said Sandy Bernier, Tobacco Control Program coordinator. "Selling tobacco without asking for any identification as well as two selling after looking at a Wisconsin driver's license where you can easily see the highlighted area in yellow that identifies the day, month and year that the youth will turn 18 is a problem.

"The clerk who swiped a Wisconsin ID at the cash register had a perfect opportunity to deny the sale, yet sold anyway," she continued. "This is very concerning."

Federal Synar regulations, which address illegal sales of tobacco to minors, require states to have laws in place prohibiting the sale and distribution of tobacco products to minors and to maintain a maximum sales-to-minors rate of not greater than 20 percent. Failure to meet this rate can result in a reduction in the state's federal block grant funds for substance abuse prevention and treatment.

"It is the legal responsibility for businesses that hold a tobacco retailer license to provide training for their employees," said Fond du Lac Police Officer Steve Olson. "Businesses need to periodically remind the clerks of their responsibility to keep tobacco out of the hands of minors and go over the basic task of identifying the age of the individual requesting the tobacco. Our goal is 100 percent compliance with all of our city retailers and no sales to minors."

Retailer compliance checks are part of the Tobacco Control Coalition's overall strategy to reduce teen smoking.

For more information about tobacco control initiatives, contact Sandy Bernier at (920) 906-5537.

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