

Tests reveal high rate of illegal e-cig sales

Trading Standards stings found 39% of retailers guilty of illegal e-cig sales

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Almost 40% of retailers illegally sold electronic cigarettes (e-cigs) and liquids to under-18s in the first national test purchase operation since age restrictions were introduced last October.

A total of 634 compliance tests were conducted between January and March 2016 by Trading Standards, which found that compliance was “disappointingly low”.

Illegal sales were made on 246 occasions, giving a non-compliance rate of 39%, according to the Chartered Trading Standards Institute (CTSI).

The most uncompliant businesses were found to be specialist e-cig suppliers, with 50% of test purchases resulting in an illegal sale and large retailers, where 30% resulted in an illegal sale. Only 27% (30 out of 111) test purchases at c-stores resulted in illegal sales.

CTSI chief executive Leon Livermore said: “More than 2.5 million adults use electronic cigarettes and evidence



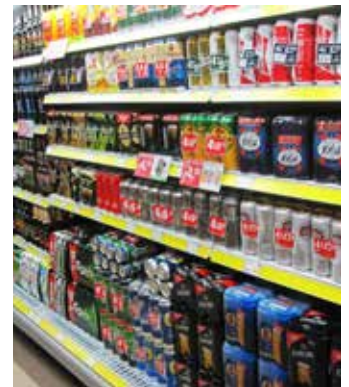
Test purchasing highlighted retailers' failures in ensuring those buying e-cigs were over 18

suggests the products are now the most popular quitting aid for smokers in England. These products are being sold in a wide variety of retailers and many of them will have little or no experience of challenging age-restricted sales.

“Regular use among children is relatively rare, but children’s awareness of, and experimentation with, electronic cigarettes is increasing. However, trading standards teams play

a frontline role in preventing children from obtaining e-cigarettes and nicotine refills, just as they do with traditional tobacco products. They provide guidance to help retailers comply with the law, but will not hesitate to take enforcement action where it is appropriate.”

Public health minister Nicola Blackwood said: “There was strong support for this measure from businesses when they were consulted and this is a timely reminder of their obligations under these regulations not to sell nicotine products to under 18-year-olds.”



From April 2017 alcohol retailers must buy from registered sources

Registration begins for alcohol wholesalers

The first registration numbers for alcohol wholesalers under the new Alcohol Wholesaler Registration Scheme (AWRS) have been issued by HM Revenue and Customs.

However, retailers can continue to buy alcohol from wholesalers who have not received their number until the AWRS comes into effect in April 2017.

From that date retailers must only buy from wholesalers who are included in the AWRS list of approved wholesalers.

Retailers will be able to check their source is registered via a simple online look-up service.

Federation of Wholesale Distributors chief executive James Bielby said: “HMRC is inspecting a large number of businesses and can’t issue all its approvals at once, so while some businesses will have received theirs it doesn’t mean that those who haven’t are not legitimate.

“To make sure you’re trading within the law you should ask your wholesaler if they have applied for registration under AWRS. Any wholesaler who hasn’t submitted an application is trading illegally.”

The registration scheme is intended to reduce the amount of duty-evaded beer, wine and spirits sold in the UK, which costs the taxpayer £1.2bn a year.

THE BIG PICTURE



➡ Retailers are reminded that there are just four weeks left before the new polymer £5 note enters circulation on 13 September.

The note, which is smaller and features Winston Churchill, will be followed by a new £10 next summer and a new £20 note in 2020.

The Bank of England is urging retailers to contact suppliers of cash-handling machines in their stores to discuss what adaptations will be required. For most machines, a software update will be needed.

The new notes are said to be safer, stronger and cleaner.

For more information on the new notes, turn to p15.