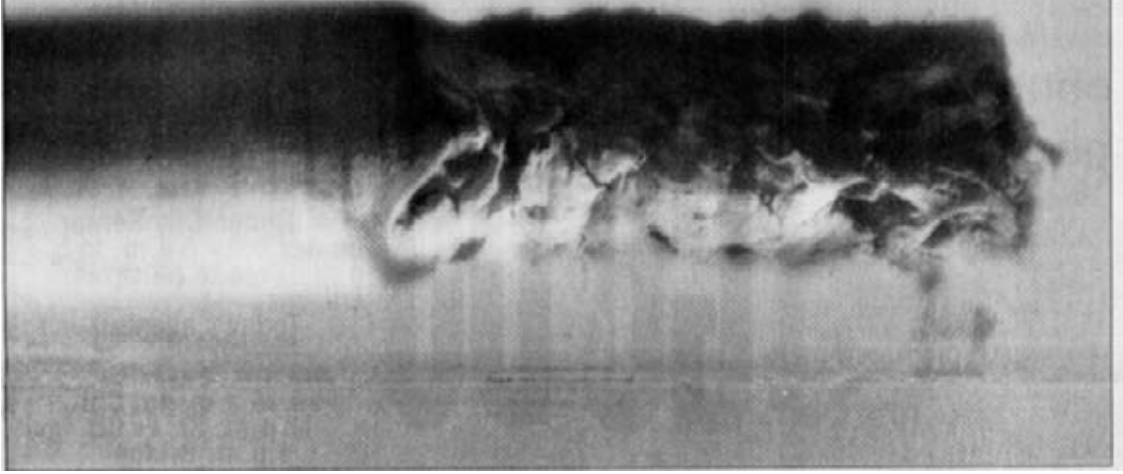


Can I see your ID?



Dodge City
Daily Globe
Dodge City, KS
Circ. 7378
From Page:
1
3/24/2007
31159



Crackdown aims at tobacco sales to minors

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By Ashley Nietfeld
Dodge City Daily Globe

When a cheerful teenager walked into a Dodge City convenience store Thursday afternoon and asked for a pack of cigarettes, the clerk asked to see her ID.

Does this sound like the proper ending to a rather dull story? Hopefully, your answer to that question is "Yes." Unfortunately, that isn't always how the story ends.

Despite the fact that state law mandates that only those 18 and older are allowed to

buy tobacco products, and the sale of tobacco to a minor can result in an administrative fine of \$1,000 and a clerk's fine of at least \$200, approximately 3,400 kids under 18 become new daily smokers each year in Kansas alone, according to the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids.

In order to make sure retailers are checking minors' IDs, Becky Thomas, a prevention consultant for the Southwest Kansas Regional

Prevention Center, and two 15-year-old girls spent the past week visiting tobacco retailers in southwest Kansas.

As part of the Reward and Reminder program, Alexis Parr and Lisa Dechant took turns trying to buy cigarettes at stores in Dodge City on Thursday. If the clerk asked

see **Crackdown** page 17A





Dodge City
 Daily Globe
 Dodge City, KS
 Circ. 7378
 From Page:
 7a
 3/24/2007
 31159



■ Crackdown

from page 1

to see their ID, they rewarded the clerk with a Thank You card and a pen.

However, if the clerk didn't ask for an ID, the girls told the clerk they forgot their money and returned to the car. That was when Thomas stepped in and gave the clerk a reminder card, which reminded the clerk that it is illegal to sell tobacco products to anyone under the age of 18 and doing so could result in a hefty fine.

Halfway through their mission with 14 retailers down, the girls only encountered one clerk in Dodge City who attempted to sell Alexis a pack of cigarettes.

Research by It's Everybody's Business, an

educational program developed by the Kansas Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services Addiction and Prevention Services division, shows that

the younger a person starts smoking cigarettes, the more likely he or she will become addicted to nicotine. In Kansas alone, nearly 400,000 people die each year from smoking-related illnesses such as cancer, heart disease and emphysema.

When checking IDs, retailers should be aware that if the person is under 18 years old, the ID will be vertical with a green strip under the photo stating the date the person will be 18.

"Retailers should refuse the sale if: The customer looks underage and does not have a photo identification, the youth presents a note

written by a parent or guardian requesting tobacco products or an adult is purchasing tobacco products for a minor," according to It's

Everybody's Business.

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