



SAN MATEO POLICE DEPARTMENT

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MEDIA RELEASE / COMMUNITY ALERT

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The San Mateo Police Department Continues to Crackdown on Underage Tobacco Abuse and Illegal Sales

Continued proactive policing drives greater retailer vigilance and strengthens efforts to prevent underage tobacco access and illegal sales.

San Mateo, CA- November 19, 2025-The San Mateo Police Department (SMPD) is upholding its commitment to protecting local youth through ongoing proactive enforcement focused on underage tobacco use by combating illegal tobacco sales. As part of a long-standing initiative that prioritizes youth safety and community responsibility, officers continue to conduct compliance checks, targeted enforcement operations, and retailer education outreach throughout the city.

In recent months, SMPD has increased engagement with local retailers, emphasizing the critical role businesses play in preventing youth access to tobacco and vape products. These efforts have resulted in more retailers paying closer attention to age-verification requirements, displaying regulations, and discontinuing prohibited product sales.

Our officers have done various operations just this year and thousands of illegal products have been confiscated throughout the city. In our most recent operation, our agency collaborated with San Mateo County Environmental Health to continue education and enforcement of our tobacco retailers. This week alone, over 1200 illegal items for sale were confiscated from two of our local tobacco retailers.

“As a department, we remain steadfast in our commitment to protecting the health and safety of our young people. The rise in underage tobacco use is a serious concern, and our officers are intensifying enforcement efforts to ensure these products stay out of the hands of minors,” said Ed Barberini, Chief of Police. “We will continue working closely with schools, parents, and local businesses to stop illegal tobacco sales at their source. Retailers who disregard the law will be held accountable. Together, with consistent enforcement and strong community partnerships, we can curb underage tobacco use and create a safer, healthier environment for all.”

The department’s ongoing initiative includes:

- **Routine and unannounced compliance checks** of tobacco retailers
- **Education and outreach visits** to ensure businesses understand state and local regulations
- **Enforcement actions** when illegal sales to minors are detected
- **Seizures** for property related to retailers violating state tobacco laws

While enforcement remains a key tool, SMPD emphasizes collaboration and community responsibility as central to its efforts. The department will continue to conduct proactive operations throughout the year to strengthen compliance and reduce youth access to harmful tobacco and nicotine products.

Illegally flavored tobacco products include, but are not limited to the following:

- Flavored vapes / e-cigarettes (non-tobacco flavors): Fruit, candy, dessert, mint, etc.
- In San Mateo County, any vapes are considered illegal
- Menthol cigarettes.
- Flavored little cigars & cigarillos.
- Flavored smokeless tobacco (e.g., flavored chewing tobacco, snus).
- Flavored blunt wraps.
- Flavored roll-your-own loose-leaf tobacco.
- Tobacco product flavor enhancers — i.e., flavor additives used to flavor tobacco
- Synthetic nicotine products (if flavored).
- Nicotine analogs / alkaloids (if they are flavored or not approved).

These education and enforcement efforts are supported by a California Department of Justice (DOJ) grant program.

If you see something, say something. Please report incidents of underage tobacco use and/or illegal sales to the San Mateo Police Department, or your local law enforcement agency.

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